THE BHAGAVAD GITA

or

The Wisdom of Krishna

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THE BHAGAVAD GITA

or

The Wisdom of Krishna

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THE BHAGAVAD GITA

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THE BHAGAVAD GITA?

Bhagavan means "Sir", "Master", "Lord", or "One who is revered". *Gita* means "song". Hence *Bhagavad Gita* may be translated literally as "Song of the Lord". However, although appearing in poetical form and recited chantingly, this work was not intended as a musical composition. It is a literary expression of profound philosophy dressed in a language and style suited for laymen. Its theme pertains to the goal of life and how to attain it. Since Krishna does the speaking, the best translation of *Bhagavad Gita* is "The Wisdom of Krishna". But popularly the work is known simply as the *Gita*.

WHO WAS KRISHNA?

First of all, Krishna was a man who lived several centuries before Christ. He was trained in the wisdom of his Hindu ancestors; but he became master of it in his own right. He rejected much of the then traditional religious ideas and practices, sifting from quantities of sacred literature many continuing strands of philosophical insight. He amalgamated them, Indian fashion, into a single comprehensive perspective designed to serve the need for guidance to happiness. His role as a man in the historical setting of the Gita is dual: he serves both as charioteer and as wise counselor to the hero, Arjuna.

Krishna may also be viewed as a character in a literary plot designed by Vyasa, reputed author or editor of the *Mahabharata*, greatest Hindu epic. Krishna's performance in

the *Gita* intermingles with, and should be viewed in light of, his larger role in the *Mahabharata,* of which the *Gita* is a small section. Here Krishna becomes idealized as expressing the epitome of wisdom, both human and divine. He is depicted as a god retaining human form and functions in order to carry on a dialogue with Arjuna to whom he reveals such wisdom to men.

Furthermore, in order to express divine wisdom convincingly, Krishna assumes the character of the supreme deity, thereby becoming the voice of ultimate reality itself. He then describes himself as omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, etc., expounding a Hindu theology which has been regarded as typical ever since. In this way, Krishna came to be regarded as the voice of God and, by implication, as God himself who assumed human form in order to reveal his divine wisdom to mankind.

Lastly, it is as such a god that Krishna is best known and honored even today. Theoreticians and poets have identified him with Vishnu, the widely worshipped deity manifesting himself in various forms. In this way, Krishna became thought of as an incarnation of Vishnu and as a true embodiment of the highest deity. In popular sentiment. the *Gita* itself is worshipped (even celebrated by a special *Gita* holiday) as the revealed word of God and as providing, even if not always clearly, the final solution to all human problems relating to unhappiness.

To the foregoing a further clarification should be added. We should ask not only who *was* Krishna but also who *is* Krishna? For, in addition to serving as a great God of the Hindus, Krishna is now becoming a spokesman to peoples of all cultures. As the world's three historically great civilizations, the Hindu, the Chinese and the European, intermingle and merge in a world superculture enjoying the riches of all three, the *Gita* becomes one of the world's great classics. The present edition of the *Gita* is as much concerned with what Krishna is and will become as with what he has been in the past.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GITA

The *Bhagavad Gita* is at once the greatest short book of the Hindus and one of the great books produced by mankind.

a. *Greatest Hindu Scripture*

Rivalled by the Ancient *Vedas* themselves, the *Brahmanas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Ramayana*, the *Gita* is surpassed only by the huge *Mahabharata* within which it is embedded. The *Gita* is great both because it incorporates and summarizes all of the Hindu philosophies prevailing at its time and because of the widespread, ages-long, reverential devotion with which Indian peoples have admired and studied it.

It is great because it embodies within itself much of what is best in earlier Hindu traditions and at the same time speaks to Hindus of many times and levels of intelligence. It stands out as a historical landmark in raising the level of moral and religious insight. It helped transform a morality and religion emphasizing ceremonial magic into one appealing to intellectual assent. It aided in promoting changes from ideas of self-seeking to ideals of self-transcendence. It allegorically generalized tribal and ritual examples into universal philosophical principles, thus broadening and elevating the perspectives and goals of a great people.

Every important later Hindu thinker has had to come to terms with it. Either he has had to accept its literal message or show how his own view of the world can be found stated in it somewhere or be made to fit with it through some ingenious interpretation. Thus the *Gita* has become controversial; and the multitude of such controversies have increased its importance. Traditionally, Hindus have disagreed about how to interpret it while at the same time agreeing about its superior significance.

The *Gita* is great also because of the many ways in which it functions in practical, everyday life. It serves both as a primary authority in Hindu moral education and as a basic religious scripture. The *Gita* is quoted in poetry, song and prayer. Its scenes and themes become subjects for morality plays, poems,

novels and movies. It is read daily in many homes and is commonly quoted in prayerful introductions to public meetings. Its stanzas serve as texts for private meditation and for religious lectures. Recurrently it serves as a focal point for philosophical scholarship and enters tangentially as an authoritative reference in many others. "*Gita* says..." means the same as "It is true that...." Even those who do not pay homage to it daily or weekly may still admire it in annual celebrations honoring its excellence. And now that India has awakened militarily, the *Gita*'s command to its hero, Arjuna, to lead his people unreservedly into battle, will be employed in the service of war even as, throughout the centuries, it has been a chief instrument in promoting and maintaining peace.

b. *A Great Book of Mankind*

Each of the world's three major traditional civilizations has produced profound and influential works which can serve to inspire and uplift men everywhere. Some writings in each civilization speak, and will always speak, only to persons steeped within it. Others, of course, inspire only some family, some class, some sect, some profession, some tribe or some small nation. But the *Gita*, although composed some twenty-five centuries ago, reflecting quarrels between two tribal families in northern India, was molded by a man of vision into a message for all mankind. He had no desire to disturb or distort the ideas of his time, but he did intend to cast them in a particular light which would hasten a return to greater happiness for his audience.

The process by which the *Gita* message has been transformed from one reflecting a local and limited ideology to one more universal has been gradual and prolonged. Vyasa had inherited from his predecessors a centuries-old tradition of seeking for general philosophical principles as implied by specific Vedic ritualistic injunctions. This process has continued through the work of many minds, whether teachers or translators, and doubtless will develop further in the future. The present translation may have its own small contribution to make to such a process.

THE MESSAGE OF THE GITA

Although the particular nuances of meaning present in the mind of the original author have been lost in history, the general import of the philosophy of the *Gita* seems quite clear. Its advice to men in trouble is simply "Do not worry." Worry and anxiety bring unhappiness and misery. Therefore try to remain calm, serene, peaceful. Here is a message for all mankind. It has been expressed by others many times and in diverse ways. But the *Gita*, which deliberately gives heed to this advice perhaps more than any other great Hindu work, stands out as one of mankind's preeminent expositions of it.

The advice, remain calm no matter what troubles arise, is given in the face of the natural tendency in men to become aroused, and troubled, whenever their desires are not satisfied. Frustrated desires grow into desirousness. Wishes become wants. Longings turn into compulsions. Men become slaves to feelings of obligation, to ambition, to demands of their own making. Once desire arises, one feels compelled to put forth effort to attain satisfaction. He thus seeks rewards for his efforts. If the rewards are good, then he wants more of them. So he feels compelled to strive harder. If the rewards seem insufficient or evil, then he feels cheated, abused, and that he ought justly to demand compensation for his effort. In either case, fears that he will not get what should be coming to him progressively overwhelm him, so that life becomes a condition of perpetual misery.

The way out of misery caused by desire obviously is to stop desiring. But, then, ought one not accept an attitude toward such desiring, and consequent frustration, that they are all parts of what is, and that frustration also should be experienced as what it really is, i.e., unfulfillment of desire, rather than as injustice? One did not deserve to come into existence in the first place; so he did not begin such existence by somehow deserving anything, no matter what life has in store for him. It is this very belief that one deserves rewards for his efforts, in one who did not and does not even deserve to exist, that constitutes an illusion giving rise to worry and anxiety and

consequently to misery. Such misery disappears when one regains primordial perspective and realizes that he deserves nothing. Then he can devote himself to enjoying his present existence as an end-in-itself, even if not regardng it as an undeserved reward.

A key term in Sanskrit for naming the way to the goal of life is *yoga*. Many such ways, and hence many *yogas*, have been expounded and pursued in Hindu practice. The author of the *Gita* not only recognizes many of these ways, already traditional in his own time, but discourses with familiarity about the disputes among those who claim superiority for each of them. His own statement of the best way to the goal is couched in terms of these controversies and can be understood clearly only in relation to them. Instead of taking sides with any of the leading schools of thought, however, he sagaciously explains and evaluates the ways in which each is correct and how each may play its own peculiar role in the total picture of how men quest for the goal of life. His own solution, then, is not so much one which opposes them as one which subtly transcends them and provides the final clue to something common in all of them which is necessary to each of them. His solution is simply that one should continue to live his life, doing all that needs to be done, without believing that he deserves any rewards for what he does. That is, one should exert effort to deal with the problems which life presents him without feeling that, when he has done all that needs to be done, he also has some reward coming to him.

It has become customary in Hindu thought to distinguish four main ways or *yogas*. Then, in conformity to this custom, interpreters feel compelled to decide which of these four is advocated by the *Gita*. All four and more are mentioned with approval in it. So adherents of each way may claim that the *Gita* authorizes his own way. Each then tends to rationalize how it also subordinates the other ways to the one he prefers. However, the author of the *Gita* has taken pains to show how his own solution is common to all of them. Although wise interpreters of the *Gita* make this clear in their teachings, the process of clarification is long and tedious and begets the

persisting demand that one must study it under a duly qualified *guru* for some time before he can expect to comprehend its subtle intent.

The present interpreter has chosen to distinguish this common element and, for convenience and the sake of clarity, call it a fifth *yoga*. The reluctance of most interpreters to distinguish such a *yoga* as a fifth appears to result from the fact that it has become included as a part of each of the other four by those who support each in its highest form. Those who deprecate other ways than the one which they regard as superior can then conveniently neglect or even deny that this *yoga* is an element in them. Hence, the reader is warned that calling disinterested interest, *nishkama yoga*, a *fifth yoga* is the author's own device for achieving clarity quickly for beginners; the reader should not expect to find it so distinguished in other writings.

THE FOUR YOGAS

The four ways have already become well known in English by their Sanskrit names, so we shall use them.

a. *Karma Yoga*

The first, perhaps the oldest, easiest and most widely practiced, is called *Karma Yoga*. The term *karma*, which has a rich cluster of connotations, presupposes the idea of reciprocity, i.e., that for each good given an equivalent good will return and for each evil given an equivalent evil will return, and a temporal process during which the principle takes its time to operate. One may be rewarded immediately or remotely. Since the principle appears to be universal and compelling, one tends to infer that if he does not reap his rewards in his present life he should justly expect to garner them in the next, or in as many other lives as may be needed. Hence the concept of reincarnation, which did not exist in early Hindu thought, emerged not only as a generalization from empirical observations about the rhythmical comings and goings of the seasons, days and nights, and of births and deaths, but

also as something logically implied by the principle of reciprocity. When it reinforced, and in turn was sustained by, the caste system which has provided enduring and relatively peaceful stabilization for Hindu social structure, its obviousness came to seem a matter of common sense.

Both the sacred scriptures and everyday life supported the idea of reciprocity. The most ancient and most sacred of Hindu scriptures, the *Vedas*, not only presuppose and advocate it, but provide detailed instructions regarding how to use it in assuring life, health and prosperity, and freedom from death, misery and poverty. The early *Vedas* are in fact manuals for properly coming to terms with the mysterious powers, visible and invisible, upon which our welfare depends. Ritualistic ceremonies are, in effect, regarded as appropriate ways of giving to the gods, either as an initial payment for expected favors or as final payment for favors received. (The *Vedas* seem to substantiate the belittling description of religion as "giving to and getting from the gods".) *Yajna*, usually translated superficially as "sacrifice", connotes that the universal principle of reciprocity is presupposed. The "Law of Karma" is essentially the Hindu way of formulating this principle. *Karma Yoga* is the way by which one seeks to earn his way to his goals by means of doing good deeds. Everyday life in India, past and present, as everywhere among men and even animals, brings its own constant reminders of the operation of this principle and, indeed, of its relatively spontaneous and seemingly instinctive operation in human nature when that nature is not distorted by other forces.

Karma Yoga, in its bare essence, then, is seeking the ends of life by doing good and avoiding evil. One may do good in any number of ways. One may be an obedient child, a persistent student, a provident father, a loving mother, a faithful wife, an attentive servant, an honest merchant, a generous benefactor, an effective ruler, a diligent public officer or a courageous soldier. He may do good by paying homage to whatever is better than himself, i.e., to both gods and superior men, or to divine and human lords. He may do good by taking care of himself — his own mind, his own soul, his own

self. For the principle of reciprocity is brought into operation by intentions. So it is really one's intentions which constitute the causes of "good and bad *karmas*", as "stored" or merited rewards are called. One's overt actions do indeed bring good and evil results into actual existence; but it is the intention to produce good or evil which is the ultimate source of the results. Thus one should pursue the goal of life primarily by devoting his mind to good thoughts, i.e., good intentions, and then, of course, by acting upon these intentions when and if occasion arises, for without carrying out such actions the intentions are not genuine. Whether a person occupies himself more with the dream world or the actual world then may not matter too greatly so far as the principle of reciprocity is concerned. But one must assure himself that he has good intentions, and plenty of them, if he expects to make progress in accumulating merit which will automatically bring him closer and closer to the goal of life.

Although, basically, there is nothing more to *Karma Yoga* than accumulation of a favourable balance of merits, even the early wise men observed that this principle does not work smoothly and surely when regarded as a kind of commercial bartering system. A man who refuses to give unless he is assured of receiving, in effect distrusts others and, indeed, the principle. His distrust itself begets evil results because such distrust is an evil in itself. Hence, in order to become assured of results by this principle, one must, reciprocally, assure himself of his faith in the principle. Without his own effort to intend that the principle is reliable he cannot expect that whatever power provides this principle will intend to reward him by it. Thus one can justly expect desired results from his good intentions and efforts only if he has faith that the results he gets are precisely those which, according to the principle, he deserves. If he does not observe the full reward, then he should expect the remainder to be stored for the future. So long as he is concerned about his life as a whole and its ultimate goal, he should not be concerned about, or impatient about, obtaining those rewards any sooner or later than they are fated to come. Consequently, one should seek to do good

without concerning himself about when, or even whether, the goods will be returned.

This, in modern thought, has come to be called "disinterested action" or even "disinterested interest". But it is more commonly spoken of as "non-attachment". Regardless of the particular kind of non-attachment which may be recommended by any adviser, implicit in such advice is the presupposition that one should not be attached to underserved values. And since this attitude of non-attachment is itself a good, merely having the attitude and holding it in mind constitutes a good, or a good intention, which automatically stores up further increments of merit. Thus maintaining an attitude of indifference has the effect, even according to *Karma Yoga*, of bringing one closer to his ultimate goal.

This more subtle interpretation has come to be regarded by wise *gurus* as so integral to *Karma Yoga* that *karma* comes to mean not, as on its face it purports to mean, do good for the sake of accumulating a store of good *karmas*, but do good with indifference to accumulating a store of good *karmas*. This paradoxical interpretation appears to be extremely confusing to beginners; there is no end to the ingenuity needed in order to explain why *Karma Yoga*, the way to the goal through interest in doing good deeds, demands rejection of interest in rewards for such deeds. The prevalence of this paradox has a kind of stalling effect upon persons trying to decide what they ought to do; it thereby conduces to postponement of making up one's mind and to accepting mystical and authoritative pronouncements as to what one ought to do. One cannot fully comprehend what is meant by *Karma Yoga* as propounded by the more learned *Karma Yogins* unless he intuitively apprehends and automatically assents to its paradoxical character.

b. *Bhakti Yoga*

A second way to the goal of life emphasizes *Bhakti*, or devotion. Here again we have a broad and all-inclusive way. One may devote himself to anything: to his studies, to his family, to his work, to his master. But the higher the object of appreci-

ation or the greater the value of the object being worshipped, the better the devotion. Hence, one should be devoted to the gods and, even better, to the supreme deity, even if one can depict and approach such deity only through one or more of its manifest forms. The way of devotion implies that, as one devotes himself more fully to something which is greater than he, he approaches, even merges with, and thus somehow attains, that greater value. For those who regard themselves as weak or in need of guidance, this may well be the best way.

An individual self, with its own will and desires for its own welfare apart from that of others, tends to become selfish and to involve itself in conflict and consequent misery. *Bhakti Yoga* is a way which does not suppress will but rather retains and magnifies it as a will to goodness, by directing it away from inferior self-centeredness toward some being of superior worth. The more selfless the devotion, the better it is; for the more that which is lower submits itself to that which is higher, the better it becomes. It follows, of course, that one who seeks what is best will want to devote himself both *most* wholly and to what is *most* good. He who surrenders his will in devoted service to that which is good thereby attains good will; and the greater the good and the more complete the surrender, the better the will.

Krishna repeatedly assumes the role of the supreme deity and offers himself as the object of highest devotion. Advocates of *Bhakti Yoga* as the best way can find ample evidence that the *Gita* supports their view. Yet some paradoxes remain for them. *Bhakti Yoga* both idealizes and despises desires. The purpose of full devotion is to get rid of all merely individual desires, for they are regarded as sources of evil. Yet it is urged that the way to get rid of such desires is not to suppress them but to merge them all into one magnificent desire for the goodness of that which is already good. When one becomes motivated by this ideal, he, in effect, expects a supreme reward for willful surrendering of his own will. So long as any trace of that expectation remains in his mind, he continues to be self-interested; but perfect devotion paradoxically requires complete absence of self-interest. Consequently, the

goal of *Bhakti Yoga* cannot be reached until one gives up all interest in reaching it. Again, as in mature *Karma Yoga*, mature *Bhakti Yoga* paradoxically requires achievement of disinterested interest. One must be willing to say, "Even though he slay me, yet will I love him". Such maturity involves *Nishkama Yoga*, the common element in all of the four *yogas*.

c. *Jnana*[1] *Yoga*

A third way seeks the goal of life through knowledge. "Knowledge" here consists neither in accumulation of facts, nor mechanical know-how, nor of practical principles. Knowledge is understanding of the nature of self and the universe as it ultimately is. Attaining such comprehension is no mere intellectual enterprise; it requires apprehension of the truth in its concrete embodiment, and assent, complete assent, to it. *Jnana Yoga* is that way by which one diligently seeks to know what is as it is, so that he can accept it as it is.[2]

Ultimate reality is regarded as being without desire, so the *Jnana Yogin* must, like the *Bhakti Yogin*, desire to understand what it is to be without desire. He must desire to become without desire, and he can succeed in fulfilling this desire only by attaining desirelessness. So long as one desires to know, he does not know; and the more anxious he is to know, the more his anxiety constitutes a barrier to his understanding. One can completely attain the goal of knowledge only by losing his interest in such knowledge; for such knowledge, when attained, is experienced as being entirely without interest. Thus, paradoxically again, mature knowledge presupposes acquisition of disinterested interest in such knowledge — or *Nishkama Yoga*.

d. *Raja Yoga*

The fourth way is really a collection of ways pertaining to

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[1]The Sanskrit *jn* in *jnana*, "knowledge", becomes "gn" as in "gnostic", derived from Greek and Latin, and "kn" in the English words "know" and "knowledge".

[2]"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

solitary living, restricted diet and exercise, control of posture and breath, suppression of sensory responses and mental activities of all sorts. Ultimate reality is conceived as a timeless presence which can be apprehended as changeless only in an act of intuition from which all disturbances have been eliminated. Thus all ideas, including all distinctions, all desires, including all hopes for success in one's present venture, and all memories, including any hint that one's present experience is a product of anything past, must disappear from awareness. Only then can one intuitively merge himself completely with ultimate reality and thus attain the final goal of life.

Such a feat requires tremendous practice, patience and sustaining power. Any part of this collection may be a complex and time-consuming occupation. *Yogic* postures alone may require years of practice to master.[3] Gaining insight into the subtleties of the philosophy of *Raja Yoga,* which were given classical expression later in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali,[4] may require serious and penetrating intellectual effort. Although some of these ways are mentioned in the *Gita,* it gives less attention to this fourth way than to any of the other three.

The *Gita* mentions *Dhyana Yoga,* the way of concentrating the attentive mind so single-pointedly and so continuously that awareness of nothing but present being as an end-in-itself appears. This is regarded as perhaps the hardest way, and as effective only if combined with other ways. Here too, success in efforts to attain the goal paradoxically requires one to become disinterested in results. For so long as one strives toward his goal, his very strife prevents him from attaining it. So long as one exerts effort to achieve, that very effort prohibits him from arriving. Not only must one put

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[3]See my *Yoga for Business Executives and Professional People,* The Citadel Press, N. Y., 1965, Stanley Paul, London, 1967.

[4]See my *Yoga, Union with the Ultimate, A New Version of the Ancient* Yoga Sutras *of Patanjali,* Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., N. Y., 1961.

forth effort, but he must do so effortlessly; and the degree to which he effortlessly puts forth his effort is itself a measure of his success in making progress.

e. *Nishkama Yoga*

The classification of all *yogic* efforts into "The Four Yogas", which has now become standard, is not stated in the *Gita* as such. The literary treatment of the *Gita* imposes no rigid scheme of types, but mention is made of many different *yogas*. In fact, the term *yoga* may apply to any means which will bring one only a little way along the path to his goal. Thus following conventional moralities, singing hymns or chanting may be *yogas*. No matter which of the many ways one follows, he can make no progress toward the goal, and he certainly cannot reach it, without encountering something that is common to all the ways. This is disinterested interest, or *Nishkama Yoga*. *Kama* means desire (not only love, passion, lust, greed and rage in their intenser forms, but also wishing, hoping and even imagining attainment of things one does not yet possess). *Nish* means "not". So *nishkama* means "without desire" or "disinterested". *Nishkama Yoga* is that way to the goal which accomplishes its end by means of disinterestedness.

However, since one can hardly expect to attain his goal without some effort, he still must desire to obtain results. He must still do, and want to do, whatever life has in store for him. He does not escape the principle of reciprocity, the Law of Karma, the need for devotion, the need for understanding, and even need for occasional quietude and physical and mental rest. To say that the *Gita* teaches *Nishkama Yoga* is not enough. It never ceases to teach *Karma Yoga*. So a fuller name for its doctrine is *Nishkama Karma Yoga*. That is, one should continue to work as he must in order to live, and to strive to produce good results, without demanding that he be rewarded for his work. Yet, neither does the *Gita* cease to teach *Bhakti Yoga*. One cannot live without some devotion to what he regards as good, better or best. One needs to devote himself to what he believes to be the highest value or supremest being in order to be true to himself as a value-seeking being. Yet it is this

greatest value which necessarily implies that a person cannot achieve it without being willing to surrender all his lesser values in preference to it. By saying "Yes" to it, he then loses interest in such lesser values. Hence, the *Gita* also teaches *Nishkama Bhakti Yoga.*

The same must be said about the need for understanding and whether understanding is better than action.[5] Each is necessary; so evaluation of the ways in which each is better leaves us with a need for both understanding and action among our obligations. Hence, the *Gita* continues to teach *Jnana Yoga,* more fully named *Nishkama Jnana Yoga.* And the same must be said also about *Raja* or *Hatha* or any other *yoga* which may be mentioned. All are aspects of life. No life can be lived without pursuing each in some degree. It is true that some people find themselves inclined to emphasize one more than another; and there is no harm in this. But when any such emphasis comes to be regarded not merely as *a* true way but as *The* true way, then he needs instruction in a broader and deeper wisdom.

One is tempted to claim that the teaching of the *Gita* can be summarized as *Nishkama Yoga,* that fifth *yoga* common to all the others. Yet to succumb to this temptation would be as vicious in its way as any of the overemphases which have just been condemned. It is a mistake to try to summarize the *Gita,* because, despite its seeming repetitiousness, it is itself a summary. It must speak for itself. It has to deal with each of a number of tendencies of the human mind to oversimplify its task. It rejects them, one after another, and shows, with painstaking reassertion, that one must be willing to do whatever needs to be done without believing that he deserves anything which he gets.

But, even having understood the message of the *Gita,* one finds that paradox remains. Life continues to be puzzling, now as then, even after explanation. Nevertheless, if life appears to any understander as paradoxical, should he then persist in trying to clear away such paradox? "Yes," so long as such

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[5]See Chapter III.

paradox appears to be in need of resolution. But also "No." For he who desires to have life's paradoxical appearance eliminated more than it is going to be eliminated is merely creating more misery for himself. For if he can attain the goal of life only by believing that he deserves nothing for his efforts, should he not also believe that he does not deserve to be freed from such paradoxical appearance merely because he happens to desire such freedom? Anxiety, including anxiety about apparent paradox, is itself the enemy of peace, tranquility and confident living. Consequently one must have faith that life is worthwhile in itself however it appears. The purpose of the *Gita* is to help men to attain that confidence and to maintain it at all times—even when life calls upon him to fight.

CHAPTER I

LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION

SLOKA 1.[1] *What happens when troubles arise? Or, what is the ultimate nature[2] of occurrences in the sphere of actual affairs[3] when we and our enemies confront each other antagonistically?*

COMMENT: The above free translation of the opening sentence of the *Gita* poses a question which the *Gita* answers not merely once, but many times. The first chapter presents the question by depicting a battle scene in which the hero, Arjuna, dutifully engaged in leading his people into a war against injustice, falters at the crucial moment before the battle begins. His high moral standards and hatred of killing make him reject

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[1]*Sloka* is a Sanskrit word for stanza or verse. The *Gita* traditionally consists of seven hundred *slokas*, arranged into eighteen groups or chapters. Each *sloka* contains two standardized lines (or four half-lines), with abbreviations and with word order rearranged to suit the meter. Resulting ambiguities often leave room for varieties of interpretation. We retain the traditional chapter and *sloka* numbering. Each chapter seems designed to answer a different question, or a different form of the same question. Sometimes the question is stated in one or more *slokas*, but sometimes it is merely implied by the discourse which follows. Some chapters include two or more explicitly-stated questions. The author has found it convenient to designate distinguishable portions of chapters dealing with different questions as sections and has introduced all of the sub-headings. He is responsible also for the chapter titles in their present form.

[2]*Dharma-kshetra.*

[3]*Kuru-kshetra.*

the idea of slaughtering his beloved relatives of neighbouring tribal families. He heroically insists that he would rather die himself than kill his kinsmen.

Answer to our opening question comes from Krishna, older cousin and elder statesman who appears both in the role of Arjuna's charioteer and as the pantheistic all-wise deity presenting himself in human form. Doubtless the author, Vyasa, employed scenes from an actual historical conflict, but he used them allegorically to illustrate how his answers to Arjuna's specific questions can serve as a complete philosophy of life.

Since the philosophy of the *Gita* is what interests us most, we relegate description of the dramatic setting, with its multitude of strange names, to Appendix I and proceed directly to the answers. The exciting quality of the opening drama also detracts from the importance of the philosophy itself, and postpones our gaining insight into it. In fact, some incongruity appears from inserting the prolonged, abstruse and variegated psychological discussions into a pause before two armies rush into battle. Hence, we choose to postpone consideration of the historical-literary setting (consisting of Ch. I and the first ten *slokas* of Ch. II) and proceed immediately to the *Gita*'s answer to life's most important question.

CHAPTER II | ITS FINAL ANSWER

A. THE ANSWER SUMMARIZED

Be Not Anxious

SLOKA 11. Krishna replied: You have been worrying about what ought not disturb you. Yet you properly express profound concern. *The wise worry about neither life nor death.*

COMMENT: The central philosophy of the *Gita* is simple: Do not worry. Worry is useless and evil. He who worries makes himself miserable. The goal of life is happiness. But happiness can be attained only by becoming willing to take what comes. Then one can enjoy the present as an end-in-itself instead of fearing the future. Anxiety, perturbation and discontent occur because we are unwilling to "accept the universe". We want it to be different. The universe, which brought us into being and will carry us beyond each particular way of being in due course, is good. We can trust it. The present is already as good as it can be, and its goodness is wasted when we fail to appreciate it. The future, whether proximate or remote, will, in turn; be as good as it can be. Refusal to trust the future, whether in this life or the next, unwisely displaces present enjoyment with worry and fear. The wise worry not.

Yet, one cannot help wondering why unhappiness exists. The question of how evil arises in the world disturbs the normal mind. One ought to be interested in eliminating evil. But he can eliminate it only by understanding it. Hence, concern about the ultimate philosophical questions is indeed proper. But worries about difficulties resulting from our duties are futile, except to the extent that they lead us to reflect upon

the nature of evil, unhappiness and worry itself.

B. REASONS FOR NOT WORRYING

1. *Being is Indestructible*

SLOKA 12. There really never was a time when you and I and these other worthy men did not exist. Nor will there really be a time when we shall altogether cease to be hereafter.

COMMENT: This sloka states the idea that ultimate reality, or what is ultimate in reality, can never be other than it is. Despite obvious changes taking place in life, something continues to be. Whatever continues to be remains when that which disappears ceases to be. If we identify ourselves with comings and goings, our lives are short and perhaps futile. But when we recognize that we are also in some sense identical with the ongoing, remaining reality, we realize that something is permanent about our being.

SLOKA 13. Just as we pass from childhood through youth to old age (without self-destruction), so (we should not fear to face any) future reembodiment. Wise persons do not worry about it.

SLOKA 14. Arjuna,[1] the appearance of objects causing sensations of heat and cold and feelings of pleasure and pain is temporary, having a beginning and an ending. (Yet you), Arjuna,[2] experience them (without fear).

SLOKA 15. The man who experiences these without perturbation i.e., who experiences pleasure and pain with

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[1]Both Arjuna and Krishna are addressed by many different names of praise, partly for poetic convenience, to fill out the meter scheme, and partly for poetic effect, to keep promoting a tone of emotional appreciation. Normally, we shall use the names "Arjuna" and "Krishna", relegating other names and their translations to footnotes. Here, Arjuna is addressed as *Kaunteya*, Son of Kunti.

[2]Literally, *Bharata*, or Descendant of Bharata.

equanimity, without developing anxieties, is fitted for the fullness of life,[3] Arjuna.[4] .

2. *Hence Killing Does Not Destroy*

SLOKA 16. That which has no being does not acquire permanence. That which does not endure does not attain fullness of being. The truth of both is obvious to apprehenders of ultimate truth.

SLOKA 17. That which is common to all things is certainly indestructible. What is indestructible, no one can destroy.

SLOKA 18. These perishable bodies are said to be embodiments of the imperishable, of the indestructible, of the infinite. *This is the ultimate justification for your fighting,*[5] Arjuna.[6]

SLOKA 19. He who believes this[7] to be the slayer and he who

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[3]The phrase, "fitted for life", has often been translated as "fitted for immortality". But the Sanskrit word, *amrita*, "not dead", may also be rendered as "alive", "beautiful" and "consisting of nectar". Since the goal of life is self-enjoyment, or the enjoyment of life as an intrinsic value, i.e., as an end-in-itself, one remains unfitted for life so long as he cannot enjoy it. He who is interested in immortality as future life becomes anxious about something which he does not yet have. But one is wise, or truly fitted for life, only if he becomes able to live without anxiety about the future, including "future immortality".

[4]Lit., *Purusarsabha*, O best of Persons.

[5]The text appears somewhat ambiguous. Both the literal translation, "Therefore fight", and the interpretation "Therefore you ought to fight your misguided kinsmen", seem weak in inference, in this particular context, which seems to justify resorting to war. In keeping with the allegorical interpretation which we have mentioned, the text may be interpreted as referring to the common mistaking of the transient for the real, and as asserting that this false view is the important evil, and as urging: "This then is what you must fight."

[6]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.

[7]The imperishable.

thinks it can be slain, neither of them grasps the truth. It neither slays nor is slain.

SLOKA 20. It is never born nor does it ever die. It has no past and will have no future. It is without beginning, timeless, changeless and self-sufficient. It does not cease with the destruction of its embodiments.

SLOKA 21. To him who comprehends the indestructibility of timeless being, it has neither beginning nor ending. How can that man, Arjuna,[8] cause the destruction of him whom he kills?

SLOKA 22. Just as a man, having discarded his worn-out clothes, puts on fresh ones, so the dweller in a body lays aside his worn-out body and goes on to acquire another new one.

SLOKA 23. This, weapons cut not. This, fire burns not. This, water wets not. This, the wind dries not.

SLOKA 24. It is thus invulnerable, incombustible, indissolvable and inevaporatable. Changeless and pervading all change, unmoving and unmoved, it perpetually exists.

SLOKA 25. It may be described as imperceptible, incomprehensible, invariable. Therefore, knowing it to be such, you have no need for worry.

3. *Changes Should Cause No Anxiety*

SLOKA 26. But even if you think of it as consisting of beginnings (births) and endings (deaths), you ought not to worry about it.

SLOKA 27. Because whatever begins also ends and whatever ends also begins. So striving to attain the inevitable (or seeking to prevent the unavoidable) is something which ought not disturb you.

SLOKA 28. Beings come from an unknown source; they appear during an intermediate stage; they again disappear into an unknown end. What in this is there to be disturbed about, Arjuna[9].

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[8]Lit., *Partha*, O Son of Pritha.

[9]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.

SLOKA 29. Some behold this as marvelous. Others praise it as marvelous. While still others hear about it as marvelous. Yet no one, even after he has heard about it, really comprehends it.

SLOKA 30. That which dwells in the body of all, Arjuna,[10] is indestructible. Therefore you need have no fear for any of its embodiments.

4. *Your Own Nature Should Cause No Worry*

SLOKA 31. And likewise, regarding your own nature,[11] you should have no fear. Because, for a warrior, there is nothing more appropriate than a call to a just war.

SLOKA 32. Arriving unsought, it serves as an opportunity to fulfill one's function. Fortunate are those warriors, Arjuna,[12] who find such a battle to fight.

SLOKA 33. If you refuse this call to war, then you forfeit your very value[13] and reputation, suffering misfortune.

SLOKA 34. And furthermore, people will recount your infamy relentlessly. For one who has been honored, disgrace is worse than death.

SLOKA 35. The war leaders will think you have fled from the battle in fear. And those by whom you have been trusted will despise you.

SLOKA 36. Also your enemies, casting aspersions upon your prowess, will call you many disgraceful names. What, indeed, could be more unbearable than this?

SLOKA 37. On the other hand, if you are killed, you will go to heaven;[14] whereas if you are victorious, you will enjoy the earth. So, Arjuna,[15] arise resolved to fight!

SLOKA 38. Having become indifferent to pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, now join in battle.

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[10]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.
[11]Lit., *dharma*. See Appendix II, "The Nature of Dharma".
[12]Lit., O Son of Pritha.
[13]Your calling (*Dharma*).
[14]And thereby also realize your own nature and fulfill your purpose.
[15]Lit., O Son of Kunti.

In this way you will not meet with misfortune.

C. THE WAY TO THE GOAL

1. *Why the Way is Good*

SLOKA 39. The ultimate basis[16] for wisdom[17] has been explained to you. Now hear about the way.[18] Enlightened

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[16]*Samkhya.* This is another important term, hard to understand due to its many different meanings in historical literature. Here the term appears to be used to refer to the way to understanding the truth about the nature of life and reality. *Samkhya,* in this context, refers ambiguously both to the (true) theory or philosophy which has just been summarized and which will be elaborated and to the nature of ultimate reality itself which serves as the basis for such truth. Part of the meaning is to be found in the contrast between knowing and doing, or between understanding and action. The term is used again in crucial passages in Ch. III where the problem of life is restated in terms of which is better, seeking the goal of life through the way of understanding or through the way of action? Hence, in much of the *Gita, samkhya* refers to the way of understanding. However, elsewhere, especially in Ch. XIII, where the nature of knowledge and its objects and differences between spirit and matter are discussed technically, *samkhya* refers to a system of philosophy. For problems involved in understanding this philosophy, see Appendix IV.

[17]*Buddhi.* Another term having no English equivalent. It refers to that awareness which comes closest to apprehending ultimate reality without blemishes or details. Hence, it is essentially intuitive apprehension, or rather a kind of faculty or ability for so apprehending. As faculty, it is sometimes translated as "intellect". As apprehension of ultimacy, it may be translated as "insight" or "wisdom" or "enlightenment". In addition to being a general term for a condition or faculty of intuitive insight, it names a particular stage in the evolution of consciousness of the world in the orthodox *Samkhya* system. For an exposition of this philosophy, see Appendix IV.

[18]*Yoga.* Here *yoga* refers to a way, or the way, to the goal of life.

with such wisdom, Arjuna,[19] you will free yourself from bondage to desire for results.[20]

SLOKA 40. In this, there are no futile attempts, nor are there disappointments. Even very little practice of this principle[21] shields one from great fear.

SLOKA 41. Herein, Arjuna,[22] the confident mind is integrated,[23] whereas the aims of the uncertain are truly multifarious and without end.[24]

2. *Foolish Ways*

SLOKA 42. Arjuna,[25] those fools addicted to literalistic interpretations of the Vedas[26] proclaim their beliefs in florid speech, thus saying that nothing else is (needed).

As indicated in the Introduction, any way which brings one somewhat closer to the goal of life is a *yoga* (related to the English word "yoke", meaning to unite). One who is not yet united in the goal needs whatever it takes to attain such union, and so in a general sense *yoga* is anything helpful. On the other hand, where distinction between striving and understanding is involved, the way of striving seems more clearly a way, a path, a direction, than the way of understanding which apprehends directly and, except for purposes of acquiring understanding, less processual. Yet also the way of understanding is as much a way as, and may be a better, because quicker, way than the way of striving for results. As one approaches the goal, life becomes more serene and peaceful, and so *yoga* may mean such serenity. One must discern from the context which of the many aspects of *yoga* is intended.

[19]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[20]I.e., to anxiety.

[21]*Dharma*. True understanding of nature involves knowing the way to the goal and the principles involved in the processes leading to attainment of the goal.

[22]Lit., *Kurunandana*, O Son of the Kurus.

[23]I.e., wholesome, unitary.

[24]I.e., lack of a final goal.

[25]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[26]The *Vedas* are doubtless the earliest Hindu scriptures. Tradi-

SLOKA 43. Ambitious for the highest goal, they stimulate new interest in seeking rewards, and recommend various methods for attaining pleasure and power.

SLOKA 44. Those bent on valuing pleasure and power, thereby having their minds occupied, do not achieve the serenity needed for a confident mind.

SLOKA 45. The Vedas describe the three *gunas.*[27] (But) Arjuna, you should surpass them. Free yourself from tensions;[28] and remain always in a condition of equipoise, freed from acquisitiveness and miserliness, and sustained through self-existence.

SLOKA 46. To him who has attained his ultimate goal,[29]

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tionally they consist of four collections, called the *Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Atharava Veda* and *Yajur Veda.* They record hymns of praise to the various gods, give directions for preparing and conducting ceremonial occasions of worship and sacrifice to the gods, and provide advice on how to maintain health and prosperity. By the time the *Gita* was composed, many of the orthodox practices apparently were performed with little understanding of their original purpose, and Krishna seems to regard them as inferior even though he admits that those who engage in them without hesitation or doubt also are freed from anxiety.

[27]Instinctive tendencies. The three *gunas,* which constitute ultimate explanatory principles in Hindu metaphysics, must be understood before Krishna's philosophy can become clear. No English equivalent for the term *guna* exists, so different English words will be used to convey the meanings intended in different contexts. See Appendix V, "The Three Gunas".

[28]"Pairs of opposites".

[29]*Brahman.* We translate *Brahman* as "ultimate reality". But "ultimate reality" must be understood in terms of the *Vedanta* tradition. The multiplicities of nature powers conceived as deities in the *Vedas* gradually merged into a pantheon of thirty-three gods and finally into a trinity. For example, *Indra* (rain) and *Agni* (fire) became *Indragni.* Synthetic processes continued until two main sects, each having its own primary deity, Vishnu and Shiva, regarded its deity as the final synthesis of all other gods. Vishnu,

the teachings of the Vedas are like water in a reservoir submerged by a flood.

3. *Rewards versus Serenity*

SLOKA 47. You have a right only to work, but never to the fruits thereof. Be not motivated by rewards, nor prone to laziness.[30]

SLOKA 48. Arjuna,[31] work performed with indifference to

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for example, was then conceived as having all other gods as incarnations, including Shiva. Then Vishnu and Shiva were conceived as two forms of a single deity (*Hari-Hara*). But the synthesis which gained lasting favor included a third major deity, Brahma. Then these three, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva were regarded, first as a trinity (three coequal gods) and then as a *trimurti*, one god with three forms and functions, i.e., creating, sustaining and destroying the universe. But the three were thought of as forms and functions of something more ultimate, more unitary, more spiritual, called *Brahman*, ultimate reality, as distinguished from *Brahma*, one of the three forms. Evolution of the world from *Brahman*, pure being, mere consciousness and undiluted bliss, into all of the multifarious beings appearing in the world which we experience, occurs spontaneously through manifestation first as the *trimurti*, then as the various gods with their consorts and many arms, heads and companions (which account for the many functions performed), through several levels of men (of the different castes), animals, plants and inanimate beings. Subjectively, evolution devolves a sense of being, a sense of awareness, a sense of I-ness, a sense of objectivity (and objects), and the organs and objects needed to account for appearances.

For further details of this evolution, conceived analogously in the *Samkhya* system see Appendix IV. A fuller summary of the history and spirit of Hindu synthesis may be found in *The World's Living Religions*, Chs. III and IV.

Since *Brahman* means "ultimate reality", it also is regarded as the ultimate in the way of value, the most intrinsic value, and hence as the ultimate goal of life.

[30]And, for that matter, do not try to avoid results, including evil rewards, when they come.

[31]Lit., *Dhananjaya*, O Winner of Wealth.

rewards and (with an attitude) equally undisturbed by success or failure is achievement of Yoga. (For) serenity[32] itself is what is meant by "Yoga".

SLOKA 49. Working for rewards is far inferior indeed, Arjuna,[33] to the wisdom of Yoga. Follow the safe course of wisdom. Miserable are those who remain slaves to rewards.

SLOKA 50. Endowed with serenity, one sheds anxieties about both good and evil results. Therefore, devote yourself to Yoga. Yoga is enjoying work as an end-in-itself.[34]

SLOKA 51. The wise, embodying serenity, having abandoned concern for rewards, and freed from the shackles of desirousness, achieve a condition which is without annoyance.

SLOKA 52. Once your mind transcends seductive delusion, then you will attain indifference to both what has appealed[35] to you and what will yet appeal to you.

SLOKA 53. When your mind, bewildered by various appeals, becomes unperturbed and stably self-sustained, then you achieve self-realization.

D. HOW THE WISE BEHAVE

1. *General Characteristics*

SLOKA 54. Arjuna asked: Krishna,[36] what are the characteristics of one persisting in this wisdom of devotion to serenity? How does a habitually wise and serene person speak (express himself)? How does he sit (or remain still)? How does he walk (or move about)?

SLOKA 55. Krishna replied: Arjuna,[37] when a man com-

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[32]Equanimity of mind.

[33]Lit., O Winner of Wealth.

[34]I.e., as its own reward.

[35]Lit., what has called you, or what you have heard or learned.

[36]Lit., *Keshava*, O Luxuriant One.

[37]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

pletely relinquishes all desire for rewards[38] and is content to be what he already is, then he is said to have achieved understanding.[39]

SLOKA 56. One whose mind remains unshaken by adversity and without craving for prosperity, freed from passion, fear and anger, is spoken of as a devotee to enduring serenity.

SLOKA 57. He who is everywhere without compulsions, who neither gloats over attaining nor complains about losing this or that good or evil fortune, his wisdom is enduring.

2. *How the Wise Speak*

SLOKA 58. Next, when one has withdrawn completely from sensuous temptations, like a turtle which draws in all of its limbs, his mental stability is assured.[40]

SLOKA 59. Sensuous enticements[41] lose their power over the self-sufficient[42] man who ignores their appeal. Such appeal itself ceases when one's end-in-itself appears.[43]

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[38]I.e., desirousness, greed, lust, thirst, ambitiousness, avarice and feelings of dissatisfaction.

[39]This and the following two *slokas* appear to answer the first part of Arjuna's question (*Sloka* II:54), "What are the characteristics of a man persisting in wisdom?"

[40]This *sloka* and the next two appear to answer the second part of Arjuna's question (*Sloka* 54): "How does a persistently wise and serene person speak or express himself?" Reply is given in terms of all the *indriyas* or organs of sensation and expression. So far as speech in particular is concerned, the calm person does not shout, demand, condemn, urge or reject. Being self-sufficient, he behaves like one who is self-contained, withdrawing his contacts, both receptive and projective, from other things, much as a turtle retracts its eyes and mouth along with its legs and tail.

[41]Lit., organs of sensation and expression

[42]Lit., fasting or abstinent.

[43]That is, when one enjoys the ultimate goal, the highest good, the supreme value, the end-in-itself, then all lesser pleasures lose their power to arouse interest. One who deliberately resists sensuous

SLOKA 60. Sensuous excitements enticingly distract the mind of a discerning man even while he strives for wisdom, Arjuna.[44]

3. *How the Wise Sit*

SLOKA 61. Having resisted all of them,[45] he sits (or remains still) in self-sufficient integrity. For he who has mastered his senses, his outlook remains serene.[46]

SLOKA 62. When a man attends to sensuous objects, they arouse his interest. Interest creates desire, and desire produces anxiety.[47]

SLOKA 63. Anxiety results in inability to discriminate. Inability to discriminate produces forgetfulness. Forgetfulness causes loss of wisdom. Loss of wisdom ends in ruin.

4. *How the Wise Walk*

SLOKA 64. But, the self-sufficient man, relying upon his own will, moves about (e.g., walks) in the presence of objects appealing to his senses, retaining perfect tranquility and remaining unresponsive to attractions and repulsions.[48]

SLOKA 65. In such perfect tranquility (serenity and confi-

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temptations may succeed by abstaining or withdrawing himself from them, but a yearning for them persists in his makeup. But when one is actually experiencing (*rasa*, tasting) intrinsic value, or the highest good itself, then all desire for objects, i.e., instrumental values, disappears.

[44]Lit., O Son of Kunti.

[45]I.e., distractions or temptations.

[46]This *sloka* and the next two *slokas*, if the pattern of three *slokas* per answer continues, appear to serve as responses to the third part of Arjuna's question (*Sloka* 54): "How does he sit or remain still?"

[47]Or anguish; literally anger.

[48]This *sloka*, reinforced by the next two or three *slokas*, deals with the fourth and final part of Arjuna's question (*Sloka* 54): "How does he walk or move about?" The last five *slokas* of the present chapter, introduced by "Therefore," appear to be intended as a general summary.

dence), all discontent disappears. For the mind of him who attains a tranquil spirit soon comes to feel confident in its wisdom.

SLOKA 66. Lack of wisdom begets uncertainty. Uncertainty yields lack in stability. Lack in stability causes lack of confidence. Without confidence, how can one be happy?

SLOKA 67. For, when a mind devotes itself to fluctuating sensations, it gradually loses its power of understanding, just as the wind tosses a boat about on the waters.

5. *The Nature of Wisdom*

SLOKA 68. Therefore, Arjuna,[49] he understands with assurance who remains completely unresponsive to all sensuous temptations.[50]

SLOKA 69. In what is as darkness for all (other) beings, the self-sufficient man awakes. In what is as waking for all (other) beings, the sage regards as darkness.

SLOKA 70. He retains peace of mind who receives all temptations the way an ocean, stirred by waters flowing into it from all sides, remains unperturbed. But not so the seeker after excitement.[51]

SLOKA 71. That man attains peace who lives without longing, without ambition,[52] without possessiveness[53] and without selfishness.

SLOKA 72. This, Arjuna,[54] is the ultimate goal.[55] No one who attains it is deluded. Being at home in it, even at the end of life, one retains union with the ultimate.[56]

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[49]Lit., *Mahabaho*, O Mighty-Armed.

[50]More literally: Whose senses are completely restrained from attention to their sense-objects.

[51]Lit., desirer of desires.

[52]Desire for good results.

[53]Lit., mine-ness.

[54]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[55]Being in *Brahman*. See above, footnote 29.

[56]Oneness with *Brahman*.

CHAPTER III | LIFE'S PUZZLE: ITS EXPLANATION

A. WISDOM VERSUS REWARDS

1. *Why Work? Why Fight?*

SLOKA 1. Arjuna asked: O Krishna,[1] if you regard wisdom as superior to striving for rewards, why then, O Krishna,[2] do you urge me into this horrible strife?[3]

SLOKA 2. You appear to confuse my mind with seemingly contradictory assertions. Explain clearly[4] that one way by which I may achieve the highest good.

2. *The Problem Analyzed*

SLOKA 3. Krishna replied: Earlier I discussed two kinds

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[1]Lit., *Janardana*, O Destroyer of the World.

[2]Lit., O Luxuriant One.

[3]*Slokas* 31-37 of the previous chapter not only explicitly urge Arjuna to fight but give reasons, each of which involves the idea of reward. Krishna himself, in the historical-literary setting of the *Gita*, functions as the advisor in prosecuting the war and serves as Arjuna's charioteer. The theme, "Arjuna, forget your fears and qualms, and fight fearlessly", recurs elsewhere in the *Gita* (see II:18; III:30; IV:42; VIII:7; XI:32-34; and XVIII:59, 78). So there can be no doubt but that the question posed here, which is, in some respects, a more specific formulation of the question opening the *Gita*, is a basic one, not merely relative to the historical setting but as inherent in the message of the *Gita* as a philosophy of life.

[4]I.e., with definiteness and certainty.

of ways of living, the way[5] which leads to understanding[6] for the reflective,[7] and the way[8] which leads to striving for rewards[9] for the active.[10]

3. *Activity Is Natural and Necessary*

SLOKA 4. A man cannot attain a state in which he is without action merely by wanting to be without it. Neither can he achieve success merely by refusing to act.

SLOKA 5. No one can ever, even for a moment, bring himself to exist so statically that he is entirely inactive. For, everyone is helplessly compelled to act by tendencies inherent in his nature.[11]

SLOKA 6. He who sits still, refusing to act by moving his muscles, (yet) occupying his mind with thoughts about objects,[12] deludes himself. He must be regarded as acting wrongly.

4. *But Serenity Is Possible and Preferable*

SLOKA 7. But one who, controlling his mental activity, disinterestedly directs his muscular activity to working for the sake of work itself,[13] he, Arjuna, excells.

SLOKA 8. Accept your allotment of work, for such work is better than no work at all. Even the preservation of

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[5] *Yoga.*

[6] *Jnana*, knowledge.

[7] *Samkhya*, wise.

[8] *Yoga.*

[9] *Karma.* See Appendix III, "The Nature of Karma".

[10] *Yogins*, those who strive towards the goal.

[11] Hindu tradition conceives casual determination as taking place in terms of three *gunas* which function in the universe as impersonal automatic forces inherent in everything and responsible for all action (and inaction) and which operate in individuals like instinctive tendencies which are very hard, if not impossible, to resist. See Appendix V.

[12] I.e., mental activity.

[13] I.e., without thought of reward: *nishkama karma yoga.*

your body would be impossible without some activity.

5. *The Principle of Reciprocity*

SLOKA 9. Initiative in the use of the principle of reciprocity[14] is another form of striving for rewards. This

[14]Since my translation at this point differs so greatly from traditional versions it seems wise to indicate these differences. The Sanskrit term *yajna* has many meanings, but custom has settled upon "sacrifice" as its most common translation. However, basically it refers to knowledge about or concern for the future. The various ceremonies described in *Vedic* literature were designed to assist in the attainment of benefits or in warding off evils. Primitive minds think not only in terms of cause and effect, looking for invisible causes wherever no visible causes appear, but also in terms of reciprocity, believing that you must give whenever you expect to get. Primitive people were much concerned about the "business of begging (through 'sacrificial' giving) and getting from the gods". The author of the *Gita* not only recognizes *yajna* as sacrificial ceremony but also allegorically extends the idea involved to the business of living as a whole. So, in order to make clear the message intended by the author, we here translate *yajna* as "principle of reciprocity", or, more fully, as "exercising initiative in the use of the principle of reciprocity". *Yajna* involves concern for future rewards through the use of this principle, in contradistinction to devotion of attention to enjoyment of the present. Thus, although Krishna has been preaching against interest in future rewards, he is now forced to show how life makes it impossible to eliminate such concern and how one can enjoy living in the present even in the presence of such interests.

To indicate how Sanskrit terms being used in translating the present and following slokas, we include them in a review of the translation of the present sloka: Initiative in the use of the principle of reciprocity (*yajnartha*) is another form of striving for rewards (*karma*). This world is enslaved by striving for rewards (*karmabandha*). (But) one may employ such (*tadartha*) striving for results (*karma*), O Arjuna, in order to bring to its finish (*samacara*) freedom from (such) bondage (*muktasanga*).

world is enslaved by striving for rewards, Arjuna.[15] (But) one may employ such striving in order to bring to its fulfillment freedom from (such) bondage.

6. *Its Origin and Nature*

SLOKA 10. In the beginning, the Creator,[16] having brought forth creatures[17] together with the principle of reciprocity,[18] said: "By (means of) this you will be motivated. Let this be the source of all your wishes."[19]

SLOKA 11. With this (principle of reciprocity), you may serve others, and these others may serve you. By serving each other mutually, you shall obtain the greatest benefit.[20]

SLOKA 12. Because you bring about desired enjoyment, others,[21] having acquired a tendency for mutual sup-

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[15]Lit., O Son of Kunti.

[16]*Prajapti*, the Progenitor.

[17]*Praja*, progeny.

[18]*Yajna*.

[19]"Wishes" (*kama*) is a general term for love, longing, desiring, hoping and striving. Translators are found of citing reference to *Kamaduk* (wish-giver), a mythical cow which miraculously fulfills every wish addressed to it. However, the meaning intended by the author appears to refer to the cause originating all wishes, not to their satisfaction.

[20]More fully: "With this (*anena*) (i.e., *yajna*, the principle of reciprocity whereby, when you make a gift or 'sacrifice', you may expect a gift in return), you may serve (*bhavayu*, i.e., support, take care of, or cherish, in a way which *tends to continue* your service to them on into the indefinite future) others (*devas*, powers, forces, *mana*, people, gods; whereas gods were appealed to in the *Vedic* rituals, any vital agent serves as a *deva* in the broader and more generalized sense apparently intended in the *Gita* as a philosophy of life), and these others (*devas*) may (i.e., *tend to*) serve you. By serving each other mutually (*paraspara*, reciprocally), you shall obtain the greatest benefit (or ultimate good)."

[21]Lit., *devas*, powers, gods.

port,[22] will give back continuingly. He who enjoys[23] what is given by others without giving to them is actually a thief.

SLOKA 13. Those wise enough to enjoy the results of the principle of reciprocity are relieved from all injustice. But those who go wrong, who prepare things (only) for themselves, experience wretchedness.

SLOKA 14. The principle of reciprocity arises from the tendency to strive for good results. Rain is produced in accordance with the principle of reciprocity. The production of food depends on rain. Living beings depend upon food.[24]

SLOKA 15. Know that striving for good results arises from ultimate reality[25] and ultimate reality has a tendency to remain unalterable. Therefore, the all-pervading ultimate reality forever depends upon the principle of reciprocity.

SLOKA 16. Thus is the chain of events set in motion. He who fails to conform to its standard falls short (or becomes deficient). Enamored by sensuous temptations, he lives a futile life, Arjuna.[26]

7. *Striving Is Ultimate*

SLOKA 17. When one finds self-enjoyment[27] wonderful, he is a self-satisfied man[28] and a self who has satisfaction only.[29] His future[30] becomes nil.

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[22] *Yajnabhavita*. *Bhava* means enduring tendency.

[23] I.e., makes use of or consumes.

[24] Hence, life itself depends upon the principle of reciprocity.

[25] *Brahman*.

[26] Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[27] I.e., awareness of the very existence of self as itself enjoyable.

[28] I.e., he needs nothing other than such awareness of self-existence in order to be happy.

[29] I.e., being perfectly satisfied, he has no desire to become different, and so has no desires, but only satisfaction.

[30] I.e., prospects of work rewards yet to come.

SLOKA 18. He even has no interest regarding what is[31] done or what is[31] not done; nor does he seek any help from any other creature.

SLOKA 19. Therefore, always do, without inhibition, whatever ought to be done. For it is through uninhibited pursuit of good results that a man attains his ultimate good.

SLOKA 20. Only by performing actions did Janaka[32] and others reach their final success. So also you ought to act in such a way as to set a good example for mankind.

SLOKA 21. For whatever the best people do, only that will others do; whatever standards of behaviour they exemplify, these everyone else follows.

SLOKA 22. Arjuna,[33] for me there is nothing to do that needs yet to be done in the whole universe,[34] not anything yet unattained that still needs to be attained. Still I persist in acting.

SOLKA 23. Surely if I failed to continue to act unrelentingly, Arjuna,[35] men would follow my example in all their ways.[36]

SLOKA 24. The universe[37] would cease if I stopped acting.

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[31]Or will be.

[32]Janaka was a king who had perfected knowledge and appreciation of the ultimacy of self-existence. Yet he behaved like a king, carrying out his public responsibilities without hesitation. In this way he set an example for others, that they too might both attain self-sufficiency and yet also serve and be served by others as is natural and necessary in life.

[33]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[34]Lit., in the three worlds, i.e., in the heavens, on earth and in the lower regions.

[35]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[36]Here Krishna assumes the role of the supreme deity, or the universe itself come alive, one who knows all because he is all. Vyasa makes him speak for the universe, to make the allegory complete. In effect, he is saying that if the universe, or existence, stopped functioning, men would also cease to act.

[37]Lit., all of "the three worlds".

And I would be responsible for the elimination of all distinctions[38] and be the represser of all projects.[39]

8. *Yet Anxiety Is Foolish*

SLOKA 25. Just as the dullards stimulate anxiety about success (i.e., attaining good results), Arjuna,[40] so the wise, in wishing to help mankind, should promote freedom from anxiety.

SLOKA 26. (Yet) one should not (be anxious to) disturb the convictions of those unwise ones who are ambitious for success; (for) the wise should engage in all their efforts without anxiety.[41]

9. *Free Will Is Illusory*

SLOKA 27. All volition is naturally created in the mind by the *gunas*.[42] (But) a person who mistakenly believes himself to be a free agent thinks, "I am an agent."[43]

SLOKA 28. But the knower of the truth, Arjuna,[44] recognizing the difference between the forces of nature and willful effort,[45] and that some[46] forces[47] come into being as responses to other forces, does not become willful.[48]

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[38]Between individuals, etc.

[39]I.e., of all beings which have come forth into continuing existence.

[40]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.

[41]I.e., one cannot himself become completely unanxious without becoming unanxious about whether or not others have anxiety.

[42]See Appendix V.

[43]I.e., "I am a doer, causer, originator of my own intentions and actions."

[44]Lit., O Mighty-Armed.

[45]"Forces of nature" and "willful effort", literally, *gunas* and *karma*, might also be translated as "instinct" and "will" in this context.

[46]I.e., as in stimulus and response.

[47]*Gunas* or tendencies. See Appendix V.

[48]I.e., anxious or attached.

SLOKA 29. Persons stupefied by the (compulsive) forces of nature[49] become attracted to such forces as means to success. Those who know all this should not (mistakenly) disturb the dull-witted and unperceptive man.

10. *Therefore Give Up Striving for Rewards*

SLOKA 30. (So) surrendering your will to me,[50] having your mind fully occupied with self-existence, being freed from all concern for the future and from all egoism[51] and freed from all anxiety, fight.

SLOKA 31. Those men who, full of confidence[52] and without complaint,[53] continue to embody these lessons of mine, they too become liberated from anxious striving.

SLOKA 32. But those who complain about and refuse to accept my teaching, deprived of all understanding, unable to distinguish,[54] know them to be unsuccessful.

SLOKA 33. Even a man who understands (still) functions in accordance with his own nature. (All) beings (naturally) follow (their own) natures. What can interference accomplish?[55]

SLOKA 34. (Each of) the senses has its natural attraction

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[49]*Gunas* of *prakriti*. For more about *prakriti*, physical nature, see Appendix IV. For more about *gunas*, see Appendix V.

[50]Krishna continues to speak for the universe or totality of existence.

[51]I.e., all interest in agency to influence outcome.

[52]"Confidence" here represents *shraddha*, often translated as "faith". The attitude is one of commitment and of full willingness to accept whatever risks may be involved. *Shraddha* is not concern about doctrinal consistency but is a feeling of trust.

[53]Self-pity.

[54]I.e., distinguish means from ends, free will from compulsory nature, anxiety from serenity, fear from confidence and willfulness from willingness.

[55]This sloka suggests comparison with the philosophy of Lao Tzu. See my *Tao Teh King by Lao Tzu*, pp. 86-91.

[56]I.e., fixed or established.

and aversion to objects. One should not yield to the power of (either of) these two. Both are his enemies.

SLOKA 35. It is better to follow one's own nature[57] imperfectly than another's nature[57] with excellence. It is better to die one's own natural[57] death than to pursue an alien nature[57] filled with dread.

B. WHY MEN FAIL

1. *What Causes Men to Short-change Themselves?*

SLOKA 36. Arjuna asked: Yet, what causes a man to thus short-change[58] himself, even as if forcefully compelled against his (own best) interests, O Krishna?[59]

2. *Desirousness, Caused by the Sense of Urgency*

SLOKA 37. Krishna replied: It is desire,[60] it is hate,[61] caused by the sense or urgency,[62] the all-permeating motivator[63] and the perpetual misdirector.[64] Recognize

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[57]*Dharma*. See Appendix II.

[58]*Papa*, often mistranslated as "commit sin", carries the idea of acting against one's own best interests, or falling short by wanting less than the best and thus doing evil or causing misfortune to oneself. The term "sin" is inappropriate because, in its strict sense, "sin" derives its meaning from Hebraic ideas of willing to go against the will of God. Neither harm to God nor willfulness to defy God is intended by *papa*. The colloquial "short-change himself" conveys the meaning best.

[59]Lit., *Varshneya*, O Descendant of Vrishni.

[60]Longing, love, lust, craving, greed, passion, avarice, wanting, willing and desiring of all kinds.

[61]Frustration, irritation, annoyance, aversion, resentment, even anger, wrath and repulsion, of all kinds.

[62]*Rajas guna*, the arousing or initiating tendency in nature. See Appendix V.

[63]*Mahasano*.

[64]*Mahapapma* or great evil; causing waste of appreciation of the present as an end-in-itself by devoting, i.e., being devoured by,

this[65] to be the enemy in this world.

SLOKA 38. Just as fire is enshrouded in smoke, the mirror clouded by dust and an embryo hidden in the womb, so this (wise course) is overshadowed by it.[66]

SLOKA 39. Understanding is obscured by this,[67] perpetual enemy of the wise, which appears as desire, like a flame which will not be quenched, Arjuna.[68]

SLOKA 40. The senses, the mind and the intellect are said to be its locations. Through these it misleads the embodied person by veiling his knowledge.

SLOKA 41. Therefore, Arjuna,[69] by mastering your senses first, you can surely defeat this debilitating enemy of knowledge and insight.

SLOKA 42. It is said that the senses are of great importance, that the mind is superior to the senses, that the intellect[70] is superior to the mind. But superior to the intellect is the highest self.

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attention to hope that the future will be better than the present. See above, footnote 58.

[65] *Rajas guna.*

[66] The all-pervading *rajas guna*. Swarupananda regards the three analogies cited in this sloka not as mere alternative similes but as indicating three degrees or levels of overshadowing. He relates them to the three *gunas*, yet to be discussed. The first, fire enshrouded in smoke, he calls *sattvic*, for "the rise of a slight wind of discrimination dispels the smoke of desire. . . ." The second, a mirror clouded by dust, is *rajasic*, because some energetic effort is required to clean it. The third, an embryo hidden in a womb, is *tamasic*, because a long time is required to bring about its results. See Swarupananda, *Srimad-Bhagavad Gita*, Sixth Edition, p. 92.

[67] The powerful, compelling influence of passion, *rajas guna.*

[68] Lit., O Son of Kunti.

[69] Lit., O Best of the Bharatas.

[70] *Buddhi*, that condition of being in which awareness of being arises and which thus gives true insight into the ultimate nature of being. "Intellect" here does not refer to a reasoning faculty but to an intuitive apprehension. See Ch. II, footnote 17, and Appendix IV.

SLOKA 43. When you have known what is superior to intellect, tranquilizing the (aroused and deluded) self by (the power of) the (wise, confident, serene) self itself, then, Arjuna,[71] you can vanquish the elusive enemy, appearing as desire,[72] which is very hard to overcome.

[71] Lit., O Mighty-Armed.

[72] Including love, wishing for good results and wanting merit.

CHAPTER IV | THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF WISDOM

A. WISDOM IS PRIMORDIAL

1. *Primeval in Origin*

SLOKA 1. Krishna said: I revealed this perpetual way to the Sun.[1] The Sun unveiled it to Manu.[2] Manu proclaimed it to Ikshavaku.[3]

SLOKA 2. Thus your worthy ancestors knew it, passing it on one to another in succession. Yet, acquaintance with this way[4] was lost over the long stretches of time, Arjuna.[5]

SLOKA 3. Today I have explained to you this very same ancient way,[6] because you are my devotee[7] and companion.[8] It is a most profound secret.

SLOKA 4. Arjuna inquired: You were born after the Sun came into being. How then can I believe that you taught this way in the beginning of creation?

SLOKA 5. Krishna replied: You and I have experienced

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[1] *Vivasvat* or *Vivaswan.*

[2] Man, or the Hindu Adam, the first man embodying the original essence of mankind.

[3] Reputed son of Manu, the famous ancestor of the solar dynasty of Kshatriyas. The point being made here is that this principle which is being taught is so essential to the nature of things that it is known to the very first beings.

[4] *Yoga.*

[5] Lit., *Parantapa,* O Harasser of Foes.

[6] *Yoga.*

[7] *Bhakto..*

[8] *Sakha.*

many births, Arjuna. I comprehend them all, while you are not acquainted with them, Arjuna.[9]

SLOKA 6. Even though by nature without beginning or end, and the creator of all beings, and master of my own being, I come into being by my own *maya*.[10]

2. *Perpetually Reexpressed*

SLOKA 7. Whenever there is a weakening of order[11] and an increase in chaos,[12] then I reassert myself, Arjuna.[13]

SLOKA 8. For the preservation of the virtuous, for the destruction of the vicious, and for the (re)establishment of truly wholesome nature,[14] (I) am reborn age after age.

SLOKA 9. Thus he who truly comprehends my cosmic origin and efforts to bring about good results,[15] having abandoned (desire for) reembodiment, he is freed from rebirth. He emulates me, Arjuna.

SLOKA 10. Saved from passion, fear and anxiety, inspired

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[9]Lit., O Harasser of Foes.

[10]Here *maya*, illusion, is treated as a tendency of existence to evolve and manifest itself. Quiescent existence, unmanifested and unevolved, is regarded as ultimate reality. One who mistakes evolved existence as real suffers from illusion. Such delusion is natural, otherwise it could not be a part of nature. The universe itself, even though completely determined, produces out of, or within, itself consciousness of agency and belief in free will. Nothing outside of the universe causes it to do this; yet desires emerge from the self-moving forces constituting the universe. Krishna tries to make this clear by taking the standpoint of the universe, existence or ultimate reality, and speaking for it.

[11]*Dharma*, principle, nature, law and order, self-discipline, self-direction. See Appendix II, especially (3)-(5).

[12]*Adharma*, disorder, loss of self-control, stupidity, etc., opposed to each of the above.

[13]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.

[14]*Dharma*.

[15]*Karma*. Krishna here speaks as if the Supreme Deity, who really transcends *karma*, here acts *karm*icly.

by me and trusting in me, many, purified by experience with self-restraint, have achieved my own condition.

B. RECIPROCATION IS UNIVERSALLY PRACTICED

SLOKA 11. No matter how people treat me, I reciprocate to them in the same way. Mankind follows my path, Arjuna,[16] always.[17]

1. *Through Gifts to the Gods*

SLOKA 12. Those ambitious for success in obtaining rewards in the present world make gifts to the gods, because success which arises from desire for results is quickly attained in the world of human affairs.

SLOKA 12. Ranks in the social order[18] emerged from me, resulting from natural causes[19] and automatic responses to them.[20] (Although I am) also the author thereof, think of me as the immutable will-less source.

SLOKA 14. Activity does not deteriorate me, nor do I have any interest in the results of my acts.[21] He who identifies

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[16]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[17]"Always", i.e., no matter which of the particular ways they choose. Vyasa now proceeds to outline some of the different kinds of practices which were being employed in his time, one by one, and to show how in each method the final goal or highest good can be reached only by confident living (*nishkama yoga*): through gifts to the gods (Sloka 12), through appreciating ultimate reality (Slokas 24-25), through gifts, restraints, study, prayer and vows (28), and through control of breath and diet (29 and 30). Slokas 13-23 seem to constitute a digression (some would suggest an interpolation), like that of a professor who decides to summarize a whole section of his philosophy in trying to drive home a particular point.

[18]"The fourfold caste". See XVIII:41-44.

[19]*Gunas*. See Appendix V.

[20]*Karma*. See Appendix III.

[21]I.e., the principle operates, but ultimate reality cannot be influenced by gifts.

himself with me is thus himself not enslaved by desire for rewards.

SLOKA 15. Intuiting this (wisdom), (our) ancient ancestors also sought relief through uninhibited efforts to produce good results. Therefore, you should behave likewise[22] as did primeval man in ancient times.

SLOKA 16. When one is striving for success and when he is not striving for success,[23] even the wise are not sure. Therefore I will explain to you what success is, and apprehending it you may save yourself from failure.

SLOKA 17. For the nature of successful striving[24] should be known, as well as the nature of futile striving[25] and of strifelessness.[26] The nature of striving for rewards is difficult to comprehend.

SLOKA 18. He who recognizes effortlessness[27] in effort[28] and effort in effortlessness is one of the enlightened among mankind.[29] He is serenely poised regarding what has been

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[22]I.e., spontaneously and without inhibition. We may note here the extolling of primitive virtues. Similarly, Lao Tzu advised "act naturally", Jesus admonished, "Except you become as a little child", Rousseau idealized the "noble savage", and anthropologists admire "unspoiled natives".

[23]*Karma* and *akarma*, or when one is working for rewards and when one is not working for rewards.

[24]*Karma*.

[25]*Vikarma*.

[26]*Akarma*.

[27]*Akarma*, disinterest in results.

[28]*Karma*, interest in good results.

[29]This controversial sentence has often been translated as "He who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, he is wise among men." A better translation: "He who recognizes an aspect of not working for rewards in working for rewards, and an aspect of working for rewards in not working for rewards, he is wise." I suggest still another alternative: "He who discovers the goal (end-in-itself, intrinsic value, success) in the way (means, instrumental activity, striving) and the way in the goal, he is wise."

done as well as for what is yet to be done.[30]

Sloka 19. He whose every enterprise is undertaken without willful motives, whose desires for rewards have been burnt out by the consuming flame of knowledge, him the wise call a man of true insight.

Sloka 20. Having given up insistence upon being rewarded for one's efforts, perfectly contented, independent, even though he goes forth to produce results, he never really creates (evil for himself).

Sloka 21. Indifferent, retaining self-awareness, freed from all accouterments aiming at merely actual conditions,[31] one suffers no evil consequences from his causal[32] activities.

Sloka 22. Happy with whatever comes to him without his seeking it, freed from all tensions,[33] free from envy; equally tranquil in success or failure, he does not enslave himself to his creations.

Sloka 23. One who clings to nothing, remaining emancipated, with his awareness quieted through comprehension, finds his desire to produce good results by utilizing the principle of reciprocity disappearing completely.

2. *Through Appreciating Ultimate Reality*

Sloka 24. Ultimate reality[34] (itself) is the act of giving.[35] Ultimate reality (itself) is the gift.[36] Ultimate reality (itself) is the consumer of the gift.[37] Ulti-mate reality (itself) is the giver. Ultimate reality shall be reached only by him who realizes that all

[30]He accepts his past accomplishments and shortcomings without pride or regret and his future prospects without elation or fear.

[31]Lit., physical, i.e., vs. mental or intended activity.

[32]Or creative.

[33]Lit., pairs of opposites.

[34]*Brahman*. See II:46, footnote 29.

[35]Lit., oblation.

[36]Lit., clarified butter.

[37]Lit., the fire of *Brahman*.

striving for rewards is ultimate reality itself.

SLOKA 25. Some goal seekers[38] direct their efforts for reciprocated rewards only to particular powers.[39] Others aim their attempts for reciprocated rewards at the all-pervasive energy of Nature[40] as a living whole,[41] even if by means of various specific ways of giving.

3. *Through Restraint of Senses*

SLOKA 26. Some offer their hearing and other senses to be consumed by quiesence.[42] Others give up sense-appealing objects such as music to the suppressor of the senses.[43]

SLOKA 27. Others surrender not only all of their desires for sensuous rewards but also all of their desires for benefits from breathing, being enlightened by knowledge of the consuming power of a completely quiescent soul.

4. *Through Gifts, Restraints, Study, Prayer, Vows*

SLOKA 28. Some offer their wealth, some suffer austerities, and still others undergo suppression of mental activity as their gifts. And some donate their efforts by learning and reciting scriptural prayers, and some through asceticism or rigid adherence to vows.

5. *Through Breath Control, Diet*

SLOKA 29. Some seek results through surrendering their outgoing breaths to their incoming breaths or their incoming breaths to their outgoing breaths, or by restrain-

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[38] *Yogins.*

[39] *Devas*, gods.

[40] Or God.

[41] Lit., the fire of *Brahman.*

[42] *Samyama.* See my *Yoga, Union with the Ultimate*, Part III, for an exposition of Patanjali's view of *samyama.*

[43] I.e., just as *rajas guna* pervades all levels, so those seeking release from anxiety even though working for goals may do so through any of the levels which seems promising to them. This same idea is expressed in the following slokas, 27-33.

ing both inhalings and exhalings, devoting themselves completely to surrendering anxiety through breathing.[44]

SLOKA 30. Some persons add dietary restrictions to their increasingly reduced breathing.[45]

6. *Usefulness of Reciprocity*

SLOKA 30 (*continued*). All of these are views of how to gain desired results through *the principle of reciprocity, of how to eliminate deficiency by means of first giving so* that one then may receive.

SLOKA 31. Those who enjoy the sweet rewards of acting on the *principle of reciprocity achieve the serenity constituting* ultimate reality.[46] This world is not for those who refuse to use the principle of reciprocity. Why (should there be) another, Arjuna?[47]

SLOKA 32. Thus various ways of using the principle of reciprocity are spread over the face of ultimate reality. (You should) recognize that all these ways arise from the need for striving for good results. By understanding this, you can attain freedom (from misery).

SLOKA 33. It is better, Arjuna,[48] to act understandingly on the principle of reciprocity than to use it mechanically,[49] Arjuna.[50] All efforts succeed completely (only) by means of comprehension.

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[44]Details of *Hatha Yoga* doctrines about *pranayama*, inhaling, exhaling and holding one's breath for purposes of relaxation and freedom from anxiety may be found in my *Yoga for Business Executives and Professional People*, Citadel Press, N. Y., 1965.

[45]This half-*sloka* terminates the series of listed ways for giving and getting disinterestedly. Now follows a summary generalization.

[46]Lit., *Brahman*. See II:46, footnote 29.

[47]Lit., *Kurusottama*, O Highest of the Kurus.

[48]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[49]Lit., with things.

[50]Lit., O Harasser of Foes.

C. NEED FOR UNDERSTANDING WISDOM

1. *Learning to Understand is Possible*

SLOKA 34. Learn this by humbly seeking guidance, by patient inquiry and by persistent devotion. Those who (already) understand these teachings about what is ultimately so will initiate you into (such) understanding.

2. *Understanding Brings Omniscience*

SLOKA 35. Having achieved this understanding, you will not again suffer delusion, Arjuna.[51] By means of it you will be able to observe the whole of creation within yourself as well as in me.

SLOKA 36. Even if you are the most degraded of all evildoers, you will rise above all deception by means of the sustaining power of understanding.

SLOKA 37. Just as a blazing fire reduces fuel to ashes, Arjuna, so the consuming fire of understanding reduces to ashes all desires for future rewards.

SLOKA 38. There does not exist in this world any cleanser that is equal to understanding. One who fully succeeds in attaining the goal of his own life realizes this within his self in the course of time.

3. *Understanding Brings Serenity*

SLOKA 39. The man of confidence achieves understanding of what is ultimately so. He becomes indifferent to sensuous temptations. He who achieves what is ultimate in the way of understanding automatically attains serenity.

SLOKA 40. He who remains without understanding, without confidence, his self filled with mistrust, comes to be destroyed. For the distrustful mind, there is no happiness, neither in this place nor in any other.

SLOKA 41. One who has abandoned working for rewards as the way to the goal, whose understanding has extin-

[51]Lit., O Winner of Wealth.

guished distrust, with self-assurance remains unattracted by desires for rewards, Arjuna.[52]

SLOKA 42. Therefore, having eradicated, by means of your sword of understanding, this uncertainty[53] infecting your heart, accept the way things are. Arise, Arjuna.[54]

[52]Lit., O Winner of Wealth.
[53]Or distrust.
[54]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.

CHAPTER V | THE PUZZLE RESTATED AND RESOLVED

A. HOW CAN ONE RECONCILE DESIRE FOR AND ABANDONMENT OF REWARDS?

1. *Which Is Better?*

SLOKA 1. Arjuna requested: You advise both abandonment of desire for rewards and also working for rewards,[1] O Krishna. Which of these two is better? Answer me this conclusively.

2. *Neither*

SLOKA 2. Krishna replied: Abandonment of desire for rewards and working for rewards are both ways to the highest good. But of these two, working for reward surpasses abandonment of desire for rewards.

SLOKA 3. He should be recognized as a true[2] abandoner who neither dislikes nor wants anything. Because, by being unaffected by choices, Arjuna,[3] he is happily freed from slavery (to them).

3. *For the Goal Is the Same*

SLOKA 4. Abandonment of rewards[4] and desire for rewards[5] appear different to children.[6] (But) the wise do not de-

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[1]Lit., *yoga*.

[2]Lit., forever or persistently.

[3]Lit., O Mighty-Armed.

[4]*Samkhya*. See II:39, footnote 16.

[5]*Yoga*.

[6]I.e., the unlearned.

clare them so. He who fully accomplishes either one obtains both as results.

SLOKA 5. The goal which is reached by abandonment of rewards is the same as that reached by desiring rewards. He who sees abandonment of rewards and working for rewards as one, he sees (truly).

SLOKA 6. Yet, Arjuna,[7] abandonment of rewards is hard to achieve without working for rewards. A wise one who wholeheartedly strives to attain the ultimate goal automatically arrives at ultimate reality.[8]

B. HOW IS LIVING IN THE GOAL EXPERIENCED?

1. *Continuing to Work, without Desire for Reward*

SLOKA 7. He who wholeheartedly strives to attain the ultimate goal, he who has purified his nature, he who has attained self-mastery, he who habitually resists sensuous attractions, he who identifies his self-existence with all self-existence, he remains uncontaminated even though he continues to exert effort.

2. *Continuing to Cause, without Desiring to Cause*

SLOKA 8. One who understands how things really are, believes thus: "I do not really cause anything to happen," when he is seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, walking, sleeping, breathing.

SLOKA 9. Speaking, excreting, grasping, opening and closing his eyes, or moving about, with his different senses attending to their various objects.

SLOKA 10. He who abides in ultimate reality,[9] foregoing attraction to desire for rewards,[10] influences results, remaining uncontaminated by evils, like a lotus leaf in water.

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[7]Lit., O Mighty-Armed.

[8]Lit., *Brahman.* See II:46, footnote 29.

[9]Lit., *Brahman.*

[10]Lit., *Karma.*

SLOKA 11. Whether with the body, or mind, or intellect alone or with the senses also, he who seeks the ultimate goal strives to produce good results, having relinquished attachment to them for the sake of self-realization.

SLOKA 12. He who strives for the ultimate goal, indifferent to the rewards for his efforts, achieves perpetuation of serenity. He who refuses to strive for the ultimate goal, is compelled by desire and enslaved by attraction to rewards.

3. *One Lives Happily in His Body*

SLOKA 13. Having abandoned all mental striving, he who has mastered himself happily resides in his body as in a nine-gated city,[11] neither doing anything nor causing anything to be done.

SLOKA 14. He who is master[12] of the world stimulates neither willfulness nor effort nor anxiety to attain rewards for efforts. But his own nature[13] proceeds (anyway).[14]

SLOKA 15. He who is master claims neither any demerit nor even any merit. Understanding is obscured by ignorance; this is the reason why those who come into being become deluded.

4. *One Lives Happily in the World*

SLOKA 16. But such ignorance is destroyed by understanding the self. Like the sun, such understanding illuminates the deepest reality.

SLOKA 17. Those who are enlightened about the way things are, whose minds accept things as they are, who feel completely at home in how things are and who accept things as they are as the ultimate goal,[15] they have

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[11]Eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, anus and urethra have been called the nine doors of the body.

[12]Lit., Lord.

[13]Tendency to be.

[14]I.e., is self-moving, self-propelling, self-acting.

[15]I.e., as the end-in-itself.

attained a condition from which there is no rebirth (or anxiety). Their dissatisfactions have been dissolved by their understanding.

SLOKA 18. Those who are wise look with equal dispassion upon a Brahmin accomplished in learning and humility, upon a cow, an elephant, a dog and even a scavenger.

SLOKA 19. Here even procreational tendencies are mastered by those in whom tranquility has pervaded their mentality. For the tranquility constituting ultimate reality[16] lacks nothing. Therefore they remain in ultimate reality.

SLOKA 20. While remaining in ultimate reality, fully apprehending the ultimacy of such reality, one enjoying enlightenment that is unwavering and undeluded neither becomes elated when he receives what is desirable nor becomes depressed when he receives what is undesirable.

SLOKA 21. He whose self is withdrawn from outside interests finds his happiness within himself. He whose self is occupied with awareness of ultimate reality enjoys unending happiness.

SLOKA 22. The joys which arise from external interests are really wombs of misery. They have their beginning and ending, Arjuna.[17] Those who are enlightened do not trust them.

SLOKA 23. He who is capable of withstanding the power of his tendencies to love and hate at present, he has attained his goal here without being separated from his physical components. He is a happy man.

SLOKA 24. He whose happiness is within himself, who feels at home within himself, and who is ever self-illuminated, he has achieved the goal of ultimate bliss.[18] He has attained ultimacy of being.

SLOKA 25. The seers whose deficiencies have disappeared, whose doubts have been cut off, whose minds have been

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[16]Lit., *Brahman.*

[17]Lit., O Son of Kunti.

[18]Lit., *Brahman* and *Nirvana.*

quieted, and who wish tranquility for all beings. have found the ultimate bliss.

5. *One Experiences True Freedom*

SLOKA 26. Those who have achieved freedom from love and hate, who are practiced in self-mastery, who have conquered their ideals, enjoy ultimate bliss wherever they are. They have found self-realization.

SLOKA 27. Excluding all external contacts, and focusing his gaze between the brows, having tranquilized his breathing as it passes through his nostrils,

SLOKA 28. Having conquered sensuous, mental and intellectual temptations, the wise one, whose aim is perfect freedom, is freed from desire, fear and anguish. He who is free at all times is really free.

C. THE GOAL CAN BE FOUND AS GOD

SLOKA 29. As omnipresent supreme God and friend of all beings, I experience reciprocated gifts and restraints.[19] He who understands me attains peace.

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[19]Lit., *yajna* and *tapas*, usually translated as "sacrifice" and "austerities".

SLOKA 2. Recognize, Arjuna,[6] that what is called Sannyasa[7] is thus really Yoga.[8]

2. *By Giving Up His Dreams*

SLOKA 2 (*continued*). No one becomes a Yogin who has not willingly given up his dreams.[9]

SLOKA 3. For a devotee seeking to progress toward the goal of life, effort to produce good results is said to be needed. For one who has completely attained the goal of his life, serenity alone is said to be needed.

SLOKA 4. When one is attracted neither by sensuous temptations nor by the production of future goods, having surrendered all his dreams, then he is said to be one who has arrived at the goal completely.

3. *By Self-mastery*

SLOKA 5. One should elevate his self by himself, and not debase himself. For each self is its own only friend and also its own only enemy.

SLOKA 6. That self is a friend of himself who has mastered his self by himself. But he who has not conquered himself, as he would an enemy, really treats himself like an enemy.

SLOKA 7. One who has attained self-mastery and tranquility, his highest self retains its wholesomeness regardless of cold and heat, pleasure and pain, honor and dishonor.

4. *By Maintaining Indifference*

SLOKA 8. A self which has become satisfied with its under-

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rewards while one works. The burden of Ch. VI seems to be: the way to be a yogin is to be a sannyasin. That is, one cannot practice *yoga*, either in everyday affairs or in traditional ways, without deliberate abandonment of desires for external rewards. The two ways intertwine; and they become identical in *nishkama karma yoga*.

[6]Lit., O Son of Pandu.

[7]Abandonment of all ambitions.

[8]Attainment of the goal of life.

[9]I.e., ideals of a better earthly life.

standing and insight is imperturbable, has mastered its senses, and thus is steadfast, is said to be a Yogin.[10] To him a lump of earth, a stone and a piece of gold are all the same.

SLOKA 9. He excels who retains the same attitude toward those of good will, toward the friendly, toward enemies, toward the indifferent, toward those who are impartial, toward those who hate, toward his close associates, and toward the virtuous and the vicious.

5. *By Solitary Living*

SLOKA 10. The Yogin should constantly engage his self in solitude, living alone, having his mind under control, freed from hope and having no possessions.

SLOKA 11. In a clean place, having arranged for himself a comfortable seat, neither too high nor too low, on Kusha grass, leather and cloth, one over the other.

6. *By Yogic Practices*

SLOKA 12. There, bringing about single-mindedness, with mind and bodily organs under control, sitting on a seat, he should occupy himself with yogic efforts in order to perfect himself.

SLOKA 13. He should keep his balanced body, head and neck still, gazing steadily at the tip of his own nose, without looking around in any direction.

SLOKA 14. With self tranquilized, fearless, persistently continent, unifying his mind, devoted to awareness of me, let him sit, regarding me as the ultimate goal.

SLOKA 15. With the self always occupied in this way, and with mastery over his mind, the Yogin attains serenity, that highest bliss which exists as oneness with me.

SLOKA 16. Yoga is practiced neither by one who eats too much nor by one who fasts completely, and neither by one who sleeps too much nor by one who is too wakeful, Arjuna.

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[10]One who has progressed far toward the goal.

SLOKA 17. For one who is moderate in eating, in enjoyments, in excretions, in sleeping and waking, pursuit of Yoga persistently prevents unhappiness.

SLOKA 18. When attention has been kept from shifting, focused within the self alone, without longing for any of the objects of desire, then it is said to be stable.

SLOKA 19. "A lamp in a windless place flickers not"; this illustrates the idea of a Yogin who controls his attention through practicing Yoga by himself.

SLOKA 20. When controlled attention comes to rest by practicing Yoga, then the self, intuiting itself, finds satisfaction within itself.

SLOKA 21. When one experiences that boundless joy which is apprehended by an insight beyond the reach of the senses, then this (awareness) is really fixed and departs not from the way things are.

SLOKA 22. And when, having attained it, one thinks of no other value as greater than it, then, being established, he remains unmoved even by grave misery.

SLOKA 23. Then he should experience a separation from all association with unhappiness which is understood as true Yoga. This Yoga should be practiced with perseverance and with a cheerful attitude.

SLOKA 24. Completely abandoning all desires originating from dreams, and mentally withdrawing the whole group of senses from their objects,

SLOKA 25. Very gradually one should attain quietude by stabilizing his attention; keeping his mind occupied with his self, one should not be conscious of anything else.

SLOKA 26. Whenever and for whatever reason the mind becomes restless and wavering and wanders about, then and for that reason one should hold it in check and restore it to dominance by the self alone.

B. WHY TRANQUILITY IS BLISSFUL

1. *Embodies Ultimate Reality*

SLOKA 27. Supreme happiness prevails for this Yogin whose

mind has been tranquilized. He who has pacified his impulses[11] embodies ultimate reality[12] without a flaw.

2. *It Enjoys Being as Intrinsic Value*

SLOKA 28. Thus the self of one occupied with enjoying intrinsic value[13] has attained the goal of life[14] without a single shortcoming. He enjoys that unlimited bliss which happily comes from conjunction with ultimate reality.

3. *It Lacks Nothing*

SLOKA 29. The goal-united person sees his self in everything and everything in his self, observing sameness everywhere.

SLOKA 30. He who sees me everywhere and sees everything in me, I never disappear for him and he never disappears for me.[15]

SLOKA 31. He who worships me as pervading all things and yet retains unity with me, no matter how he lives, that person who accepts things as they are[16] lives within me.

SLOKA 32. He who sees sameness everywhere, regarding all other beings as he regards himself, no matter whether in happiness or in misery, he is regarded as the supreme Yogin.[17]

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[11]*Rajas* or arousing tendencies.

[12]Lit., *Brahman*—being.

[13]Lit., practicing *yoga*.

[14]Lit., is a Yogin.

[15]Here, in *slokas* 29-31, is found Krishna's explanation of how pantheism flows from the view which accepts all that is and intrinsic value as the same.

[16]Lit., a Yogin.

[17]Attainer of the ultimate goal.

C. HOW CAN ONE REMAIN SERENE WHILE YET BEING RESTLESS?

SLOKA 33. Arjuna asked: This Yoga[18] which you, Krishna,[19] have explained as serenity, I do not see how it can remain steady while continuing to be restless.

SLOKA 34. The mind is really restless, Krishna, and impetuous, powerful and persistent. I think that mastery of it is as hard as (mastery) of the wind.

By Practicing Indifference to Impulses

SLOKA 35. Krishna replied: Arjuna,[20] no doubt the restless mind is hard to master. But by practice, Arjuna,[21] and by indifference to impulses, it can be subdued.

SLOKA 36. For one who is not self-controlled, Yoga[22] is hard to attain. This is my belief. But for one who is self-controlled, it can be attained by methodical effort.

D. WHAT HAPPENS TO ONE WHO FAILS?

SLOKA 37. Arjuna asked: What happens,[23] Krishna, to an uncontrolled man who is filled with conviction and yet whose mind wanders away from Yoga[24] without having obtained success in it?[25]

SLOKA 38. Krishna,[26] may he not, like a scattered cloud, lose both,[27] and perish, with nothing to cling to, bewil-

[18]Persisting present enjoyment of tranquil living as the end-in-itself.

[19]Lit., *Madhusudana*, O Slayer of Madhu.

[20]Lit., O Mighty-Armed.

[21]Lit., O Son of Kunti.

[22]Living as if the end or value of life were already completely realized.

[23]Lit., what end does he meet?

[24]Being content with existence as intrinsic value.

[25]I.e., *yoga*.

[26]Lit., O Mighty-Armed.

[27]I.e., present enjoyment and hope for the future.

dered, on his way to the ultimate reality?[28]

SLOKA 39. You ought to be able to dispel these my doubts completely, Krishna. Except for you, no other dispeller of my doubts can be found.

1. *He Gets Another Chance*

SLOKA 40. Krishna replied: Arjuna,[29] neither here nor elsewhere is he destroyed. For no one who does good ever comes to an evil end, my friend.

SLOKA 41. He who fails in his yogic efforts[30] is reborn in the home of a virtuous and well-to-do family, after arriving in the realms of men of good deeds and remaining there indefinitely.[31]

SLOKA 42. Or he may be born in the family of wise Yogins.[32] But a birth which is of such a sort is very difficult to obtain in this world.

SLOKA 43. There he retains possession of the wisdom accumulated in his earlier existence; and then he again strives after final success, Arjuna.[33]

SLOKA 44. By those former habits alone he is irresistibly drawn. Even he who (merely) wishes to know about Yoga (easily) rises above those concerned with only a literalistic interpretation of the Vedas.

2. *Eventually He Too Reaches the Goal*

SLOKA 45. By effort and mental discipline, the Yogin,[34]

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[28]Lit., *Brahman*.

[29]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[30]I.e., does not attain the goal of life in his present life.

[31]Vyasa here, *Slokas* 41-45, expresses the traditional Hindu view of reincarnation.

[32]People who are content with their lot in life.

[33]Lit., O Son of the Kurus.

[34]I.e., the striver seeking to attain the goal. NOTE: Whether the term *yogin* means one who strives or one who has attained must be determined from the context.

purged of deficiencies, made complete through many rebirths, reaches the final goal.

E. WHICH THEN IS BETTER?

1. *Yoga versus Restraint? Study or Work?*

SLOKA 46. The Yogin is superior to those who practice austerities, superior to those who understand and also superior to those devoted merely to striving. Therefore, Arjuna, be a Yogin.

2. *Yoga as Confident Identity with the Universe*

SLOKA 47. And among all Yogins who have merged their inner selves with me, he who reveres me faithfully,[35] him I hold to be most self-integrated.

[35]I.e., shares my enjoyment of what is, as it is, as ultimate reality and intrinsic value, confidently, assuredly, serenely and without any question, doubt, worry or anxiety.

CHAPTER VII | FULLER EXPLANATION

A. HOW TO EXPERIENCE IDENTITY IN EVERYDAY AFFAIRS

SLOKA 1. Krishna said: *Arjuna,*[1] *having your mind so* completely joined with me, relying on me, engaged in ultimate union with me,[2] you should understand[3] fully and without doubt what you have heard from me.

SLOKA 2. I will explain to you in full detail this knowledge of self and the world which, when it is understood, will leave nothing else to be known.

SLOKA 3. Among thousands of men, few strive for perfection. Even among the strivers for perfection, few really[4] know me.

1. *The Constituents of Nature*

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[1]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[2]*Yoga.*

[3]How should you understand, i.e., interpret for ordinary practice, what has been said? Now follows a pantheistic exposition which seems easier for ordinary people to comprehend, accept and act upon, than the more abstruse, impersonal philosophy which only a few can grasp.

[4]*Tattvatah*, translated here as "really", means "the way things are" or "are in their ultimate nature". Now follows an exposition of a traditional Hindu conception of the constituents of reality. This view has been developed most clearly in the *Samkhya-Yoga* systems of philosophy, but the concepts and languages are shared by all of the classical schools which developed later.

SLOKA 4. Earth, water, fire, air, ether,[5] mind,[6] intellect and finally ego,[7] of these is my eightfold nature[8] composed.

SLOKA 5. This (eightfold nature) is (my) lower (nature). But you should know that my higher nature is different from this, Arjuna;[9] it is the principle of life[10] by which the world is maintained.

2. *Their Relation to Ultimate Reality*

SLOKA 6. All beings have their source[11] in these two. Be assured of this, Arjuna. I am the creator of the world, its producer and its consumer.

SLOKA 7. Nothing, Arjuna,[12] is superior to me. In me all

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[5]Earth, water, fire, air and ether are the traditional "five elements" constituting physical being.

[6]*Manas*, or mind, here includes its various organs of perception, one for each of the five elements. Fire is visible to the eyes. Air as wind is felt as touch. Earth can be smelled through odours. Water is tasted as flavours. And ether is the medium through which sound is heard.

[7]Conception of, and subtle distinctions between, mind (*manas*) and intellect (*buddhi*) and egoism (*ahamkara*, I-am-ness, or the sense of self as agent) cannot be made clear without deeper study. Rough translations will have to suffice for present purposes. See Appendix IV.

[8]*Prakriti*, or all of existence other than soul, *purusha*. Clear distinctions between *purusha* and *prakriti* are developed in the *Samkhya-Yoga* philosophies, but the author of the *Gita* appears to be using these terms in less-clearly-defined ways. *Prakriti* may be translated as "body" or as "physical nature". In the next *sloka*, Krishna refers to *jiva* (soul) rather than *purusha* (soul). See Appendix IV.

[9]Lit., O Mighty-Armed.

[10]*Jiva*, soul. Etymologically this term is related to the Spanish *viva*, the French *vivre* and the English "live", as well as to the Sanskrit Shiva, all meaning life, vitality, soul, somewhat ambiguously.

[11]Lit., wombs.

[12]Lit., O Winner of Wealth.

this[13] is strung along like a series of jewels on a thread.

3. *How Ultimacy Appears in Everything*

SLOKA 8. I appear as liquidity in water, Arjuna.[14] I am light in the moon and sun, the holiest syllable[15] in all the Vedas,[16] sound in air, and manliness in men.

SLOKA 9. I am the sweet fragrance in earth and the glow of energy in fire. I am the vitality of all beings and the austerity of ascetics.

SLOKA 10. Realize, Arjuna,[17] that I am the enduring source of all beings. I am discernment in the discriminating. I am boldness in the brave.

SLOKA 11. I am the strength of the strong, freed from longing and lust. I am desire (itself) in all beings which do not reject their own nature,[18] Arjuna.[19]

SLOKA 12. And also whatever has a tendency to remain self-sustained, and whatever has a tendency to arise and to degenerate,[20] visualize them as from me alone.

4. *How Everything Depends upon Ultimacy*

SLOKA 12 (*continued*). But I am not in them; they are in me.

SLOKA 13. Everyone in this world is deluded by these three forces appearing as tendencies,[21] failing to recognize me as a being without tendencies[22] and superior to them.

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[13]I.e., all beings, their eightfold constituents multitudinously embodied, their various reincarnations, and the successive creations and dissolutions of the universe.

[14]Lit., O Son of Kunti.

[15]*Aum* or *Om*. See VIII:13.

[16]Scriptures containing sacred chants.

[17]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[18]*Dharma*. See Appendix II.

[19]Lit., O Best of the Bharatas.

[20]Reference here is to the three *gunas* as natural tendencies causing all things. See Appendix V.

[21]*Gunas*.

[22]Lit., changeless.

SLOKA 14. These tendencies, which are my own ways of appearing,[23] are difficult to penetrate. But those who embrace me, they penetrate through these appearances.

SLOKA 15. Evil-doers, the ignorant, the degraded fail to embrace me, with understanding deceived by appearances, and possessed by tendencies belonging to demons.

B. FOUR KINDS OF APPRECIATORS

1. *Those Suffering Afflictions*

2. *Those Striving for Understanding*[24]

SLOKA 16. Four sorts of good people appreciate me, Arjuna; those suffering afflictions, those striving for understanding, those seeking for good in the world, and those accomplished in understanding, Arjuna.[25]

3. *Those Accomplished in Understanding*

SLOKA 17. Of these, the understander who is enduringly committed to devotion to unity is the best. To the understander I am really the most dear, and he is dear to me.

SLOKA 18. All of them are truly worthy, but I regard the understander as my own self. For he remains with his self attached to me alone as the ultimate goal.

SLOKA 19. At the end of many lives the understander reaches me, realizing that Krishna[26] is all that is. Such exalted souls are very scarce.

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[23]Lit., *maya*, illusion, usually interpreted as power to become manifest in the world of appearance.

[24]This *sloka* outlines four kinds of people. The first two kinds receive no further mention. The third is discussed in *Slokas* 20-23 below, and the fourth is treated in *Slokas* 17-19 immediately following.

[25]Lit., O Best of the Bharatas.

[26]Lit., *Vasudeva*, a name for God, pantheistically conceived, and here identified with the innermost or most ultimate self.

4. *Those Seeking Good in the World*

SLOKA 20. Others, whose understanding has been overcome by various kinds of desires, devote themselves to other gods, pursuing their various rituals, motivated by their respective inclinations.

SLOKA 21. Whichever particular kind of thing[27] a devotee prefers to worship with confidence, that confidence of his I really make convincing.[28]

SLOKA 22. Filled with such confidence, he pursues his worship of that particular kind of thing, and from it he realizes that desire which is, in reality, satisfied by me alone.

SLOKA 23. But the rewards of those of low intelligence continue to be limited. The worshippers of gods hanker after their gods, even as my devotees long for me.

C. HOW THE DELUDED REGARD ULTIMACY

SLOKA 24. The foolish regard me, the unmanifest, as having become manifest, not knowing my ultimate nature, unchanging and unsurpassed.

SLOKA 25. Being shrouded by the illusion of separation,[29] I am not apparent to all. This deluded world does not seek to know me as without beginning or end.

SLOKA 26. Arjuna, I comprehend the past and the present and the future, but no one comprehends me.

SLOKA 27. Arjuna,[30] deluded by conflicts emerging from desire and aversion, all beings are enticed into delusion by their creation, Arjuna.[31]

SLOKA 28. But men deserving rewards for meritorious deeds,

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[27]Lit., form.

[28]Krishna's assertion here may be taken as supporting a constant theme among Hindus: "All religions are one".

[29]*Maya*, the way in which manifested beings appear as different from each other and from ultimate reality.

[30]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.

[31]Lit., O Harasser of Foes.

whose deficiencies have been eliminated, freed from the illusory value of choices between alternatives, they appreciate me with enduring tenacity.

SLOKA 29. Those striving for freedom from decay and death, who embrace me, recognizing that all things are rooted in ultimate reality[32] and apprehending the totality of what is, enjoy self-sufficiency and realize all of the good consequences resulting from effort.[33]

SLOKA 30. Those who comprehend me as ultimate existence and ultimate power combined, together with the principle of reciprocity, they regard me with a serene attitude even in the face of death.

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[32]Lit., *tat* is *Brahman*.

[33]*Karma*.

CHAPTER VIII | FURTHER QUESTIONS

A. SEVEN QUESTIONS

SLOKA 1. Arjuna asked: (1) What is ultimate reality?[1] (2) What is the ultimate self? (3) What is *karma*, Krishna?[2] (4) And how is material existence described? (5) How is ultimate power explained?

SLOKA 2. (6) What is the principle of reciprocity and how does it function in this world, Krishna?[3] (7) And when we face death, how are you to be regarded by those who have attained permanent self-sufficiency?

The Questions Answered

SLOKA 3. Krishna replied: (1) Ultimate reality[4] is perfect changelessness. (2) What is called the ultimate self is self-perpetuation. (3) The well-known *karma* is the initiator which causes the origin and continuing nature of beings.[5]

SLOKA 4. (4) Material existence is the tendency to change. (5) The ultimate power is the personal and animating principle in man and other beings.[6] (6) The ultimate

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[1]Lit., *Brahman*. See II:46, footnote 29.

[2]Lit., *Purusottama*, O Supreme Person.

[3]Lit., O Slayer of Madhu.

[4]Lit., *Brahman*.

[5]See Appendix III.

[6]For further exploration of the general nature of animating principles, see the discussion of *mana* in *The World's Living Religions*, Ch. II.

principle of reciprocity is (exemplified by) my own present embodiment, Arjuna.[7]

Sloka 5. (7) And when facing death, one who proceeds toward freedom from his body, keeping me alone in mind, he joins my state of being. This is certain.

Sloka 6. But also whatever tendencies one keeps in mind when finally abandoning his body, these alone does he come to, Arjuna,[8] being constantly occupied with these tendencies.

Sloka 7. Therefore keep me in mind at all times, and fight. With your mind and attention devoted to me, you will certainly come to me alone.

Sloka 8. Perpetually committed to striving to attain the goal, with awareness not attracted by anything else, by remaining attentive, Arjuna,[9] one merges with the ultimate power which animates men and other beings.

Sloka 9. He who keeps in mind the venerable, intelligent guide, simplest of the simple, whose form escapes apprehension, sustainer of all, self-illumined like the sun, and beyond all darkness,

Sloka 10. He faces death without mental anxiety. And devotedly committed to the power of Yoga,[10] and having firmly focussed his living force[11] between the two brows, he obtains the power of the ultimate spirit.[12]

B. THE WAY TO PROCEED

Yogic Methods

Sloka 11. That which envisioners of the truth speak of as changeless, that into which those who are self-sustained in tranquility are merged, and that which those desiring

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[7]Lit., *Dehabhritamvara*, O Best of Embodied Beings.

[8]Lit., O Son of Kunti.

[9]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[10]*Yoga*, the self-enjoyment of the present as intrinsic value.

[11]Lit., *prana*, vital energy associated with breathing.

[12]Lit., *purusha*, person.

the self-contained life pursue, that is the way which I will explain to you briefly.[13]

SLOKA 12. Closing completely all avenues to the mind, concentrating attention in the centre of one's being,[14] focussing his life force[15] within his head, engaging in final merging of all divergent tendencies,[16]

SLOKA 13. Pronouncing the one-syllabled "Om"[17] (which names) ultimate reality,[18] keeping me constantly in mind, he who departs, abandoning his body, he reaches the ultimate goal.[19]

SLOKA 14. He who always keeps me in mind, persistently unaware of anything else, I am easily accessible to him,

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[13]This *sloka* introduces a new section. The *sloka* contains no question, but the "lecture topic" is stated. Items mentioned in *Slokas* 10-13 were later treated more fully by Patanjali. See my edition of his *Yoga Sutras* as *Yoga, Union with the Ultimate*, pp. 94-125.

[14]Lit., heart.

[15]Lit., *prana*. See *ibid.*, pp. 110-113 on *pranayama*.

[16]Lit., *yogadharana*. See *ibid.*, pp. 117 and 57-64 on *dharana*.

[17]*Om* or *Aum* is regarded as the one syllable which most closely approximates ultimate reality because it is thought of, and is chantingly pronounced as, omnisonal or as incorporating all of the sounds within itself. Some regard it as also integrating three differentiated sounds, *a-u-m;* and just as the *trimurti* (trinity), or three essential aspects of deity (creator, preserver and destroyer, like three cosmic *gunas*), merge more ultimately in that which includes them all, so *Aum*, as both three sounds and one syllable, symbolizes ultimate reality in this way also. See *ibid.*, pp. 53-55.

[18]Lit., Brahman.

[19]The ultimate way and the ultimate goal are the same. *Gatim* may be translated here either as way or as goal, but perhaps as way-goal, for the way to enjoying life as an end-in-itself (goal) is by enjoying life as an end-in-itself (*arriving at* by *living in* the goal), and one who continues to enjoy life as an end-in-itself thereby continues on his way.

Arjuna.[20] He is constantly immersed in enjoying life's goal.[21]

SLOKA 15. Having reached me, having achieved the ultimate in success, the highest selves do not again return to the realm of change and suffering.

SLOKA 16. All stages approaching ultimate reality and value are subject to backsliding, Arjuna, but for those who have reached me, there is no rebirth, Arjuna.[22]

C. HOW THINGS ARE MANIFEST

1. *Days and Nights of Brahman*

SLOKA 17. Those creatures acquainted with "the Days and Nights of Brahman", see a "Day" as lasting for a thousand ages and a "Night" as enduring for a thousand ages.[23]

SLOKA 18. From the unmanifested, all that is manifested emerges during the passage of a Day; and reemerges with that which can only be spoken of as "the unmanifested" with the coming of a Night.

SLOKA 19. The very same multitudes of beings, coming to birth again and again, reemerge with the coming of a Night as helplessly as they emerge with the coming of a Day, Arjuna.[24]

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[20]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[21]Lit., the steadfast Yogin.

[22]Lit., O Son of Kunti.

[23]A "Day" of Brahman is regarded as a long period during which quiescent reality bestirs itself and gradually evolves the whole universe of beings which also devolve in a general subsidence. A "Night" of Brahman is thought of as an equally long period during which Brahman remains quiescent and undisturbed. A Day endures temporally, lastingly, but a Night, even though "equal" to a Day, is timeless, hence non-temporal and unending. The problem of how even Brahman could determine when an equally long period of perfect quiescence had elapsed appears not to have bothered those who held this theory; the ideal of equality is apparently sufficient to warrant the belief.

[24]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

2. *Eternally Unmanifest Being*

SLOKA 20. But still more ultimate than this is another unmanifest being, eternally unmanifest, which is that in all beings which is not destroyed even when they are destroyed.

SLOKA 21. That which is called the eternally unmanifest, that is acclaimed to be the eternal goal, from which, once it has been reached, there is no backsliding. That is my ultimate domicile.

SLOKA 22. That ultimate self-realization, Arjuna,[25] is obtainable by devotion to nothing else than that within which all beings dwell and by which all things are pervaded.

D. WHICH IS THE WAY?

SLOKA 23. Which is the way to no redisturbance and which to redisturbance, for Yogins who go forth? Now, Arjuna,[26] I shall speak about that way to go.

1. *Two ways: Light and Dark*

SLOKA 24. Fire, light, day, bright moon, summer — people who grasp ultimate reality reach ultimate reality by going forth on this way.

SLOKA 25. Smoke, darkness, night, dark moon, winter — the Yogin who proceeds by this dreary[27] way backslides.

SLOKA 26. The light and the dark, both of these paths are thought to be perpetual. By the one, going involves no redisturbance; by the other, a person slips back again.

2. *Enjoy Life as Intrinsic Value*

SLOKA 27. Knowing these two ways, Arjuna,[28] no Yogin is misled in any way. Therefore, Arjuna, always practice yoga.

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[25]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[26]Lit. O Best of the Bharatas.

[27]I.e., dim; literally, moonlike light.

[28]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

SLOKA 28. The Yogin who knows this transcends all that is proclaimed to be rewards from scriptural study, reciprocation, self-discipline or even gifts. He achieves the ultimate condition which is also the original.

CHAPTER IX | HOW THINGS DEPEND ON ULTIMATE REALITY

SLOKA 1. Krishna said: Now I will indeed explain this deeply hidden truth to you who does not complain. Knowledge of this, sustained by discrimination,[1] once comprehended, will deliver you from harm.

SLOKA 2. This supreme liberator from impurities is the dominating vision and dominating mystery. (Yet) it is intuitively comprehendible, in harmony with natural principles,[2] very easy to accept, and perfectly reliable.

SLOKA 3. (But) persons who lack faith in this natural principle,[2] Arjuna,[3] revert to ways fraught with recurrent miseries and death without approaching me.

A. ULTIMATE REALITY PERMEATES ALL THINGS

1. *They Depend on It; Not It on Them*

SLOKA 4. By me the whole world is permeated. I am imperceptibly embodied. All things depend on me; yet I do not depend upon them.

SLOKA 5. Yet things as such are not present in me. Such is the mystery of my power. My self produces and sustains things without depending upon them.

SLOKA 6. Just as the mighty winds blowing everywhere always depend on space, so think of all things as depending upon me in the same way.

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[1] Or theory verified by practice. See F. Edgerton, *The Bhagavad Gita*, p. 89.

[2] *Dharma.*

[3] Lit., O Harasser of Foes.

SLOKA 7. All things, Arjuna,[4] endure in my nature.[5] At the end of each eon I absorb them again; at the beginning of each eon I regenerate them.

2. *They are Created without Wanting To Be*
SLOKA 8. Since my own natural manifestation is arrested and regenerated again and again, the multitudes of beings in the whole of this creation are manifested naturally (regardless of) whether they want to be or not.

3. *It Creates without Caring about Them*
SLOKA 9. Yet these doings do not bind me to desire for rewards, Arjuna.[6] (I am) like one sitting unconcerned, without interest in how they are affected.

4. *It Creates Both Change and Permanence*
SLOKA 10. Observed by me, nature produces both the changing and the unchanging. In this way, Arjuna,[7] the world is caused to revolve.

B. ATTITUDES TOWARD ULTIMATE REALITY

1. *Fools Despise Omnipotence in Human Form*
SLOKA 11. Fools despise me when I take on human form, ignorant of the ultimate nature of my omnipotent being.
SLOKA 12. With futile hopes, futile efforts, futile knowledge, and undiscriminating, they remain attracted to a deceiving nature, like fiends and devils.

2. *The Wise Appreciate Its Assuming Divine Nature*
SLOKA 13. But wise men,[8] Arjuna,[9] appreciate with

[4]Lit., O Son of Kunti.
[5]*Prakriti*, material manifestation.
[6]Lit., O Winner of Wealth.
[7]Lit., O Son of Kunti
[8]Lit., *Mahatmas.*
[9]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

undistracted attention my assumption of a divine nature, having known (me already as) the perpetual source of all things.

SLOKA 14. Forever glorifying me, and endeavoring to endure resolutely, and reverently devoted to me, they worship me through permanent union with me.

SLOKA 15. And likewise, knowing reciprocally, others reciprocate,[10] worshipping[11] me as one and as many, in various forms and through all faces.

C. WAYS IN WHICH REALITY APPEARS

SLOKA 16. I am the principle of propriety[12] as well as the principle of reciprocity.[13] I am the act of giving as well as the gift.[14] I am the song[15] as well as the singing.[16] I am the fire as well as its fuel.[17]

SLOKA 17. I am the father of this world, the mother, the source, the grandsire. I am the truth to be apprehended, the means for clarifying vision, and the agent which brings about perfection of wisdom.[18] And also I am the

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[10]I.e., just as I, who am ultimately one without need of knowledge either of myself or of them as many, nevertheless I do observe myself and them as such, so they, realizing that they too, being really identical with my ultimate unity, submit to seeing both themselves and me (in my various forms) as many in whatever way such "manyness" appears.

[11]I.e., appreciating.

[12]Lit., sacrificial ritual.

[13]Lit., act of sacrificing.

[14]Lit., foods and medicines from plants.

[15]Lit., *mantra.*

[16]I.e., traditionally accompanying the pouring of clarified butter sacrificially.

[17]Lit., offering, i.e., of butter, poured into it.

[18]Lit., *aumkar*, or pronouncing of the sacred symbol *Aum.* See VIII:13; XVII:23, 24. Here *Aum* appears to mean "Amen" in the sense of bringing to mind its final assent to accepting both ultimate

Rig, Sama and Yajur Vedas.[19]

SLOKA 18. I am: The goal and the way to it, the appearance and that to whom it appears; the all-provider, the sheltering refuge, and the sympathetic companion; the springing forth and the subsiding; the foundation and the building; the source of change and that which never changes.[20]

SLOKA 19. I am the giver of warmth. I am rain, both that withheld and that let loose. Both immortality and mortality, and both being and non-being, I am, Arjuna.

D. HOW TO APPRECIATE ULTIMATE REALITY

1. *Not by Following Traditional Religion*

SLOKA 20. Those who seek me by following traditional religion,[21] by drinking soma,[22] to become purified from sin and worshipping through sacrificial ceremonies,[23] prayerfully yearn for arrival in heaven. Having reached the holy realm of the gods, they hope to enjoy the divine

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and less than ultimate reality for what it is. The universe itself, with Krishna as its voice, is "The great amen of peace". This sentence might be abbreviated as: "I am Truth, Purity and Holiness."

[19]These were the three earliest collections of scriptures, comparable, perhaps, to the Hebrew Pentateuch which later served as the most original and most sacred of revelations.

[20]A more poetic translation of this sloka is that by B. L. Atreya: "I am the Way and the Goal; the Lord, the Witness, the Abode, *the Shelter, the Friend* (sweet-hearted), *the Origin*, the *Dissolution*, the Foundation, the Treasurehouse (of all values), and the Imperishable Seed (of the world)." (Unpublished).

[21]Lit., *traividya*, the three views or three knowers, is commonly interpreted as "those who know (and practice) the teachings of the three *Vedas*".

[22]Intoxicating beverage.

[23]I.e., who initiate seeking favours from me by means of the principle of reciprocity inherent in traditional ideas of worshipping through sacrifices.

pleasures of gods in heaven.

SLOKA 21. Having enjoyed the magnificent spread of the heavenly sphere, they reenter the world of mortals after their merit[24] has been exhausted. Thus followers of traditional religion[25] are caught in rounds of coming and going and of desire and frustration.

2. *But by Appreciating It Directly*

SLOKA 22. Those creatures who worship me, attending continuously to nothing else, being always supremely united with me, I continue to supply all their needs and to preserve their safety.

3. *Yet all Devotion Is to It Indirectly*

SLOKA 23. Even those devotees of other gods who initiate reciprocation in full confidence, they really initiate reciprocation with me also, Arjuna,[26] (even though they are) ignorant of the best way.

SLOKA 24. For I alone am really both the receiver and the giver in all reciprocation. But they do not really know my true nature; and so they must get along with something inferior.

SLOKA 25. Those committed to the gods yearn for them. Those loyal to their ancestors revere them. Those who value prosperity pursue wealth. And those who appreciate me persist in union with me.[27]

SLOKA 26. A leaf, a flower, some fruit, or some water — whoever offers these to me with goodwill and confidence,

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[24]I.e., rewards deserved by initiating good results through the cosmic principle of reciprocity.

[25]Lit., conformers to the three principles (*dharmas*), usually interpreted as the three *Vedas*.

[26]Lit., O Son of Kunti.

[27]B. L. Atreya recommends a more traditional rendering: "Those who worship the gods reach them. Those who worship the ancestors reach them. Those who worship the elements attain them. And those who worship me reach me".

them I receive as given with devotion by an earnest mind.

SLOKA 27. Whatever you cause, whatever you receive, whatever you pay, whatever you give, whatever you try to refrain from doing, Arjuna,[28] do it as a gift to me.

4. *By Accepting Self as Ultimate*

SLOKA 28. In this way you will try to free yourself from being dominated by desires for producing good and bad rewards. By accepting self as the end-in-itself, one attains the goal of life and freedom and approaches me.[29]

SLOKA 29. I am the same throughout all things. To me nothing is either hated or loved. Yet whoever devotes himself to appreciating me, he (finds himself a home) in me, and I also (find a home) in him.

SLOKA 30. Even when a very wicked person appreciates me with undivided attention, he would be regarded as really doing good because he too has committed himself completely.[30]

SLOKA 31. He soon again regains his true self and attains enduring peace. Be assured, Arjuna,[31] that he who really appreciates me never ceases to live.

SLOKA 32. Whoever takes refuge in me alone, Arjuna,[32] even though he may be born in a low station in life, a woman, a trader or a labourer,[33] he also reaches the ultimate goal.

SLOKA 33. How much more easily can the virtuous Brahmin[34]

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[28]Lit., O Son of Kunti.

[29]I.e., approximates my own perfection or ultimacy of being and value.

[30]Lit., resolved rightly.

[31]Lit., O Son of Kunti.

[32]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[33]"Trader" and "labourer" here refer to the Vaishyas and Sudras respectively, the two lowest of the four traditional castes of Hindu society.

[34]"Brahmin" here refers to a member of the highest of the four castes, traditionally the most scholarly as well as the most holy.

and devotees of the highest wisdom, having suffered through this unpleasant, temporary world, appreciate me.

SLOKA 34. (Therefore) become mindful of me, become devoted to me, enter into and revere me. Thus uniting yourself with me, accepting me as the ultimate goal,[35] you come to me alone.

[35]Lit., *yana*, meaning both "way" and "goal" or condition in which way and goal become identical or indifferent.

CHAPTER X

THE NATURE OF ULTIMATE REALITY

SLOKA 1. Krishna said: Again, Arjuna,[1] listen to my highest teaching which I will explain to you, my own beloved, because I wish you well.

A. IT IS THE UNCAUSED SOURCE OF EVERYTHING

SLOKA 2. Neither all of the gods nor the greatest sages can envision my forthcoming. I am the source from which the gods and the great sages and everything else emerged.

SLOKA 3. He who recognizes me as uncaused, without beginning, and omnipotent and omnipresent, he, among mortals, remains without delusion and relieved of all deficiency.

SLOKA 4. Enlightenment, knowledge, freedom from delusion, forgiveness, truthfulness, self-restraint, tranquility, happiness, misery, birth, death, and even fear and courage,

SLOKA 5. Non-violence, equanimity, contentment, austerity, benevolence, fame and shame, all are traits of being which are endebted to me for existence.

SLOKA 6. The seven great saints, the four primeval seers, and the wise men[2] are embodied in my nature. They were

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[1]Lit., O Mighty-Armed.

[2]Although much thought has been given to precisely which particular historical or mythical persons were referred to here, Indian scholars seem still uncertain. See S. D. Budhiraja, *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*, pp. 362-366, for a summary of various opinions. The general meaning of this *sloka* in referring to the wisest of the ancients, who presumably has more intimate insight into truth and reality, is

creations of my mind. From them (all) these (other successive) progeny (have appeared) in the world.

SLOKA 7. (All) these are expressions and reunions of mine. He who recognizes their true nature, he becomes reunited to permanent appreciation of the goal of life, freed from any present uncertainty.

SLOKA 8. I am the source of all. From me everything evolves. Rejoicing in this, the enlightened love me, thereby endowing themselves with continuing existence.

SLOKA 9. With their attention fixed on me, with their life's way and goal identified with me, they continue to enlighten each other and continue to exhibit me, through always being contented and happy.

SLOKA 10. To those satisfactorily united with me, loving me with affection, I provide that enlightened way by which they come to me.

SLOKA 11. Merely out of compassion for them, I have descended into (this realm of) ignorance, (so that I may) remove darkness by instilling tranquility within their selves through lighting the lamp of knowledge.

B. OTHER ULTIMATE CHARACTERISTICS

SLOKA 12. Arjuna said: *Thou art the ultimate reality, the* final resting place, the complete cleanser, the everlasting divine spirit, the supreme deity, uncreated omnipresent.

SLOKA 13. All of the sages, (including) the divine sage Narada,[3] and Asita,[4] Devala[4] and Vyasa[5] have testified about you (in the same way). And now you yourself assure me likewise.

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clear without filling in specific details.

[3]Narada is said to have revealed the *Ramayana* to Valmiki.

[4]*Samkhya* teachers. See *Mahabharata, Shanti Parvan*, Chs. 229, 275, and 318.

[5]Vyasa appears to be the author or compiler of the *Mahabharata*, who here again includes himself among the truly wise.

SLOKA 14. All this which you have said to me, Krishna,[6] I regard as true. Truly, O Lord,[7] neither the gods nor the demons comprehend your description.

SLOKA 15. You alone intuit your own self by your own self, O Supreme Spirit, creator of all beings, master of all things, God of all gods, and ruler of the universe.

C. HOW MANIFEST IN THE WORLD?

SLOKA 16. Explain to me fully your own powerful manifestations by means of which the world is proliferated, and how you sustain them so pervasively.

SLOKA 17. How shall I envision you as constantly aware of ultimacy, O Krishna.[8] In what and how many ways and manners can you be made apparent to me, O Lord.[9]

SLOKA 18. Tell me again, in detail, O Krishna,[10] about your ultimate unity and its manifestations. For I am never bored of hearing about immortality.[11]

SLOKA 19. Krishna replied: Yes, I will now tell you about my truly powerful self-manifestations (or at least) the outstanding ones, Arjuna.[12] (For) there is no end to the details of my (nature).

1. *As Self in the Core of All Things*

SLOKA 20. I am the self, Arjuna,[13] established in the core of all things. I am the beginning and the middle and the end of things.

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[6]Lit., O Luxuriant One.
[7]Lit., *Bhagavan.*
[8]Lit., O Yogin.
[9]*Bhagavan.*
[10]Lit., O Destroyer of the World.
[11]I.e., deathlessness.
[12]Lit., *Kurusrestha,* O Best of the Kurus.
[13]Lit., *Gudakesha,* O Destroyer of Foes.

2. *As Powers and Pinnacles of All Kinds*

SLOKA 21. Among the deities[14] I am Vishnu.[15] Among the illuminators, I am the brilliant sun. Among the winds I am the tornado.[16] Among the stellar bodies, I am the moon.

SLOKA 22. Among the sacred scriptures,[17] I am the most essential.[18] Among the gods, I am the king of the gods.[19] Among the organs of apprehension, I am the mind.[20] Among (the kinds or levels of) beings, I am consciousness.

SLOKA 23. Likewise, among the Rudras,[21] I am Shiva.[22] Among the Yakshas and Rakshasas,[23] I am Kubera.[24] Among the Vasus,[25] I am Pavaka.[26] Among the high mountains, I am Meru.[27]

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[14]Lit., *Adityas,* or sons of Aditi, twelve celebrated deities. See Budhiraja, *op. cit.*, pp. 370-371.

[15]Vishnu, regarded by his followers as the chief of deities and hence as ultimate reality itself, is believed to have numerous, even infinite, incarnations as gods, demigods, men and animals. One popular view emphasizing "the ten *avatars* (incarnations) of Vishnu" has been adapted to include the Buddha as the ninth *avatar* and Christ as the tenth, thereby incorporating both Buddhism and Christianity within the completely comprehensive vision of the unity of all religions as involved in the complete unity of ultimate reality.

[16]Lit., *Marichi.*

[17]Lit., the three *Vedas.*

[18]Lit., the *Sama Veda.* See X:17.

[19]Lit., *Vasava,* or *Indra,* who was so regarded in *Vedic* times.

[20]Mind, *manas,* is traditionally thought of as like each of the five senses, but as superior to them.

[21]Gods of stormy destruction.

[22]Lit., *Sankara,* ultimate destroyer of the whole world.

[23]Robber demons and guards of the hidden treasures of *Kubera.*

[24]Lit., *Vittesa,* robber-baron, god of wealth.

[25]Eight nature deities.

[26]Fire.

[27]Mythological Olympian home of the gods seven or eight *thousand miles high.*

SLOKA 24. Among the Purohits,[28] Arjuna,[29] envision me as Brihaspati, the head priest. Among generals, I am Skanda.[30] Among the bodies of water, I am the ocean.

SLOKA 25. Among the Maha-Rishis,[31] I am Bhrigu.[32] Among the orations of praise, I am the final Amen.[33] Among gifts, I am the most celebrated gift.[34] Among mountain ranges,[35] I am the Himalayas.

SLOKA 26. Among all the trees, I am the most sacred.[36] Among the penetrating sages, I am Narada.[37] Among the Gandharvas,[38] I am Chitra-ratha.[39] Among successful seekers after enlightenment, I am the wise Kapila.

SLOKA 27. Among steeds, think of me as the well-born[40] Uchcha-shrava.[41] Among the majestic elephants, I am Airavata.[42] And among men, I am the ruler of mankind.

SLOKA 28. Among weapons, I am the thunderbolt.[43] Among

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[28]Priests.

[29]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[30]Or *Kartikeya*, Mars-like generalissimo of celestial armies.

[31]Great sages.

[32]The strongest and the wisest.

[33]Lit., the one-syllabled *Aum* or *Om*, traditionally the holiest sound, according to Hindu opinion. See VIII:13; IX:17; XVII:23.

[34]Like the gift of life celebrated in Christian communion, accompanied by hymns of praise and rejoicing.

[35]Lit., enduring things.

[36]Lit., *Ashwattha*, now called *Pipal*, highly revered in India, relative of the Banyan tree. See XV:1-3. See also W. Douglas P. Hill, *The Bhagavadgita*, pp. 236-37.

[37]See X:13.

[38]Celestial singers and musicians.

[39]Celestial choirmaster.

[40]Lit., nectar-born.

[41]Indra's horse, noted for its sensitive hearing.

[42]Indra's elephant, which, like his horse, emerged from the cosmic ocean when it was churned by the gods seeking to obtain the secret of immortality.

[43]Were Vyasa writing today, he might well have mentioned the

cattle, I am Kamadhuk.[44] Among impregnators, I am Kandarpa.[45] Among serpents, I am Vasuki.[46]

SLOKA 29. I am Ananta among the reptiles, Varuna[47] among the fishes;[48] and I am Aryama[49] among our ancient ancestors, Yama[50] among the judges of future destiny.

SLOKA 30. And among the demons, I am Prahlada.[51] Where there are clocks, I am time. Amidst the beasts, I am the king of beasts.[52] And among the birds, I am the eagle.[53]

SLOKA 31. Among the refresheners, I am the wind. Among the warriors, I am Rama.[54] Among fishes, I am the shark.[55] Among the rivers, I am the Ganges.

SLOKA 32. Of all things created, Arjuna, I am their beginning and their end, and also all that is in between. Among the sciences, I am the science of the highest self. Among the propounders of theories, I am theory[56] itself.

SLOKA 33. Among the letters of the alphabet, I am Alpha. Among compound words, I am the most expressive.[57]

H-bomb.

[44]Mythical cornucopian cow-of-plenty, an inexhaustible source of succour, also churned from the cosmic ocean.

[45]Cupid, the god of love.

[46]King of snakes.

[47]Ocean god.

[48]Water deities.

[49]Adam.

[50]Ruler of the underworld.

[51]Heroic chief of these demons.

[52]Lion.

[53]Lit., *Garuda*, son of *Vinata*, king of birds, upon which the God Vishnu himself rides.

[54]Hero of the *Ramayana*, renowned for his prowess in battle and his unmatchable archery.

[55]Lit., *Makara*, a mythical water animal with a long snout like an elephant. Thus some may translate this as "alligator", while others may prefer "whale".

[56]Or theoreticity.

[57]I.e., those in which words with opposite meanings are joined

SLOKA 24. Among the Purohits,[28] Arjuna,[29] envision me as Brihaspati, the head priest. Among generals, I am Skanda.[30] Among the bodies of water, I am the ocean.

SLOKA 25. Among the Maha-Rishis,[31] I am Bhrigu.[32] Among the orations of praise, I am the final Amen.[33] Among gifts, I am the most celebrated gift.[34] Among mountain ranges,[35] I am the Himalayas.

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[34]Like the gift of life celebrated in Christian communion, accompanied by hymns of praise and rejoicing.

[35]Lit., enduring things.

[36]Lit., *Ashwattha*, now called *Pipal*, highly revered in India, relative of the Banyan tree. See XV:1-3. See also W. Douglas P. Hill, *The Bhagavadgita*, pp. 236-37.

[37]See X:13.

[38]Celestial singers and musicians.

[39]Celestial choirmaster.

[40]Lit., nectar-born.

[41]Indra's horse, noted for its sensitive hearing.

[42]Indra's elephant, which, like his horse, emerged from the cosmic ocean when it was churned by the gods seeking to obtain the secret of immortality.

[43]Were Vyasa writing today, he might well have mentioned the

macy of diplomats. And also I am the secrecy of secrets; I am the knowledge of knowers.

D. YET ALL THE MANIFEST IS ONLY A BIT OF IT

SLOKA 39. *So, therefore, Arjuna, I am the ultimate source* of all things. Nothing exists, whether moving or unmoving, except through me.

SLOKA 40. There is no end to my powers to make things manifest, Arjuna.[66] Hence what has been expressed by me here is merely illustrative of the varieties of my manifestations.

SLOKA 41. Be convinced that whatever is manifest as being, goodness and power, all such is really an expression of some bit of my boundless energy.

SLOKA 42. Yet, why do you need to know so many of these details, Arjuna? I remain in the world, supporting this whole creation by a little bit (of my boundless energy).

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[66]Lit., O Harasser of Foes.

3. *As Endless Time and All Dimensions of Space*

SLOKA 33. (continued). Also I am the endlessness of time and the source of all the directions (or dimensions) or space.

4. *As All-Devourer and All-Initiator*

SLOKA 34. I am the all-devouring death, and the initiator of all that is yet to be. I am fame and fortune, speech and memory, intelligence, constancy and mercy.[58]

SLOKA 35. Among the sacred hymns, I am the most sacred.[59] Among poems, I am Gayatri.[60] Among the months, I am January. Among the seasons, I am Spring.

SLOKA 36. I am the treachery of swindlers. I am the brilliance of the splendid. I am victory. I am courage.

5. *As the Existence of All Things*

SLOKA 36. (continued). I am the very existence of whatever exists.

SLOKA 37. Among the Vrishnis,[61] I am Vasudeva.[62] Among the Pandavas,[63] I am Arjuna. Also, among the sages, I am Vyasa.[64] Among the bards, I am the bard Ushana.[65]

SLOKA 38. I am the rod of those who rule; I am the diplo-

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in pairs in such a way that the meanings of both of the words are fully retained in it (e.g., a husband-wife team, or a true-false test).

[58]These seven virtues have been allegorically pictured as female deities.

[59]Lit., Among the hymns of the *Sama Veda*, I am those of the *Brihat Sama*, or those written in the *brihati* meter.

[60]A *Vedic* verse form having three feet with eight syllables each.

[61]Krishna's ancestors.

[62]Krishna's father, the one who brought the ancestral lineage to its furthest development.

[63]The five sons of King Pandu, of whom Arjuna, recipient of Krishna's *Gita*, is the most heroic.

[64]Author and compiler of the *Gita* and the mammoth *Mahabharata* which contains it. See X:13; XVIII:75.

[65]Sometimes identified with *Shukracharya*, lawgiver and teacher.

Ashvins,[6] and the Maruts.[7] See these many wonders which have never been seen before, Arjuna.[8]

SLOKA 7. Here and now, without moving behold the whole created universe, changing and unchanging, as my embodiment, Arjuna,[9] and whatever else you wish to see.

2. *Invisible Magnificence*

SLOKA 8. But you cannot really see me with these eyes of yours. So I loan you a divine eye, that you may see my godly perfection.[10]

SLOKA 9. Sanjaya[11] said: Having spoken these things, O King,[12] Krishna,[13] the great and perfect God, revealed to Arjuna[14] his ultimate form as God:

SLOKA 10. Waiting with many mouths[15] and watching with many eyes,[16] presenting myriads of wonderful vistas,[17] adorned with varieties of resplendent ornaments, bristling with swarms of shimmering spears,

SLOKA 11. Bedecked with beautiful garlands and raiments, perfumed with fragrant odours, illuminated by a completely astonishing brilliance, and with faces extending out indefinitely in all directions.

SLOKA 12. If thousands of suns arose together in the sky,

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[6]Legendary physicians who could restore youth to the aged.

[7]Winds. See X:21.

[8]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.

[9]Lit., O Destroyer of Foes.

[10]I.e., God as experiencing all existence as the end-in-itself.

[11]Reporter of the battle scene to the blind King Dhritarasthra. See Appendix I.

[12]I.e., Dhritarasthra.

[13]Lit., *Hari*, multifunctioning God, including being the god of destruction.

[14]Lit., the Son of Pritha.

[15]I.e., all-devouring.

[16]I.e., all-seeing.

[17]I.e., sights to be seen.

CHAPTER XI

IS GOD GLORIOUS OR FEARFUL?

SLOKA 1. Arjuna spoke: My confusion is gone, thanks to the words which you have spoken for my benefit, revealing the ultimate secret of intuitive knowledge of the highest self.

SLOKA 2. For I have heard from you, O Krishna,[1] details about the beginning and the end of things and also about the magnitude of imperishability.

SLOKA 3. So be it, O Highest God, as you have described yourself. Yet I still crave to behold your form as God, O Supreme Person.

SLOKA 4. If you think I am capable of beholding it thus, then please reveal your imperishable self to me, O Perfect God.[2]

A. WAYS IN WHICH GOD IS GLORIOUS

1. *Visible Beauties*

SLOKA 5. Krishna replied: Look, Arjuna,[3] at the hundreds and thousands of forms having multitudinous sorts of powers and multifarious colours and shapes.

SLOKA 6. Behold the Adityas,[4] the Vasus, the Rudras,[5] the

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[1]Lit., *Kamalapattraksa*, Lotus-leaf eyed.

[2]Lit., *Yogeshwara*, or God as experiencing existence as the end-in-itself.

[3]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[4]A group of deities. See X:21.

[5]Storm gods. See X:23.

Ashvins,[6] and the Maruts.[7] See these many wonders which have never been seen before, Arjuna.[8]

SLOKA 7. Here and now, without moving behold the whole created universe, changing and unchanging, as my embodiment, Arjuna,[9] and whatever else you wish to see.

2. *Invisible Magnificence*

SLOKA 8. But you cannot really see me with these eyes of yours. So I loan you a divine eye, that you may see my godly perfection.[10]

SLOKA 9. Sanjaya[11] said: Having spoken these things, O King,[12] Krishna,[13] the great and perfect God, revealed to Arjuna[14] his ultimate form as God:

SLOKA 10. Waiting with many mouths[15] and watching with many eyes,[16] presenting myriads of wonderful vistas,[17] adorned with varieties of resplendent ornaments, bristling with swarms of shimmering spears,

SLOKA 11. Bedecked with beautiful garlands and raiments, perfumed with fragrant odours, illuminated by a completely astonishing brilliance, and with faces extending out indefinitely in all directions.

SLOKA 12. If thousands of suns arose together in the sky,

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[6]Legendary physicians who could restore youth to the aged.

[7]Winds. See X:21.

[8]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.

[9]Lit., O Destroyer of Foes.

[10]I.e., God as experiencing all existence as the end-in-itself.

[11]Reporter of the battle scene to the blind King Dhritarasthra. See Appendix I.

[12]I.e., Dhritarasthra.

[13]Lit., *Hari*, multifunctioning God, including being the god of destruction.

[14]Lit., the Son of Pritha.

[15]I.e., all-devouring.

[16]I.e., all-seeing.

[17]I.e., sights to be seen.

such brightness would simulate the radiance of that Magnificent Spirit.

SLOKA 13. Then Arjuna[18] beheld embodied in the God of gods the whole universe, diffused through countless divisions, yet remaining united therein.

SLOKA 14. Then, overwhelmed with amazement, with hair standing on end, Arjuna[19] bowed his head, joined his hands,[20] and spoke to the Powerful One.[21]

SLOKA 15. Arjuna said: I see embodied in you, O Powerful One,[21] all other powers and all of the many varieties of things, including ultimate reality depicted as God[22] seated on an eternal lotus, completely surrounded by intelligent men and animate powers.

SLOKA 16. I picture you with many arms and torsos and mouths and eyes, extending everywhere with no end to your presence. I can see neither end, nor centre, nor even a beginning of your infinite power and infinite presence.

SLOKA 17. I see you with diadem, mace and discus,[23] showering a mass of radiance everywhere, like a blazing fire and dazzling sun, hard to look at. Incomparable!

SLOKA 18. You are the eternal ultimate goal of knowledge. You are the ultimate home of the universe. You are the imperishable provider of order.[24] You are the everlasting spirit. Or so you seem to me.

SLOKA 19. I see you with neither beginning nor middle nor

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[18]Lit., the Son of Pandu.

[19]Lit., the Winner of Wealth.

[20]I.e., placing palms together, fingers upward, close to his chest, in a gesture of reverence.

[21]Lit., *deva*, god, power, deity.

[22]Lit., *ish*, i.e., *Ishwara*, creator, all-inclusive deity.

[23]Vishnu is typically pictured as holding a mace or club, a disc or quoit, a conch shell and a lotus, one in each of his four hands.

[24]Lit., *dharma*, a very general term with a broad range of interrelated meanings: law, order, principle, truth, teaching, morality, duty, etc. See Appendix II.

end, with infinite power, with an endless number of arms, with sun and moon for your eyes, with the blazing fire[25] as your mouth, and your radiance as warming the whole universe.

SLOKA 20. The space between heaven and earth is pervaded by you alone, a unity extending in all directions. Beholding *your marvellous and awesome presence, the three worlds*[26] are overwhelmed, O Mighty One.[27]

SLOKA 21. Hosts of deities exist within you, some filled with fear, praying with palms together. Companies of great sages and saints sing your praises with many hymns, shouting "Hail!"

SLOKA 22. The Rudras, the Adityas, the Vasus and the Sadhyas; the Vishwas, the Sahwins, the Maruts and the Ushmapas;[28] and hosts of Gandharvas, Yakshas, Asuras and Siddhas—all gaze upon you and all are quite amazed.

B. WAYS IN WHICH GOD IS FEARFUL

SLOKA 23. Beholding your magnitudinous presence, with countless mouths and eyes, with innumerable arms and thighs and feet, with so many bellies and so many rows of terrible teeth, the worlds are frightened, and so am I.

SLOKA 24. When I behold your omnipresence permeating the heavens with multicoloured blazes, with voracious mouths and huge fiery eyes, then I become terrified in my deepest self, and lose both courage and tranquility.

SLOKA 25. Having viewed your horrifying teeth and mouths, doomed by the all-consuming fires of time, I have lost my sense of direction and can find no peace. Have mercy, O God of gods, Home of the Universe!

SLOKA 26. And all of these sons of Dhritarashtra, together

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[25]I.e., that which consumes everything.

[26]Heaven, earth and the underworld.

[27]Lit., *Mahatma* or great soul; i.e., Krishna.

[28]*Pitris* or *Manes*.

with companies of kings, and Bhishma, Drona and Suta's son,[29] along with our own warrior chiefs,[30]

SLOKA 27. Are hurrying to plunge into your terrible and frightful mouths, some to be stuck in the spaces between your teeth with mangled heads.

SLOKA 28. Just as many torrential rivers rush toward the ocean, so these heroes of the human world plunge into your flaming mouths.

SLOKA 29. Just as moths quickly fly to their destruction in a flaming fire, so do these worlds plunge to their destruction, also rushing into your maw.

SLOKA 30. Gulping whole worlds from all sides in your flaming mouths, then licking your lips! Your fierce rays blaze throughout all creation, and scorch it, O Krishna.[31]

SLOKA 31. Tell me how you exist, O Dreadful Presence! I salute you, God of all. Be gracious! I long to grasp the essence of your being, but I fail to comprehend the reason for your profusion.

C. GOD AS BOTH DESTROYER AND CREATOR

1. *Now Engaged in Harvesting*

SLOKA 32. Krishna said: I am Time, the destroyer-creator of the world, who having brought the world to maturity, am engaged in harvesting. Even without you,[32] not a single warrior enlisted in (these) hostile armies will continue to exist.

2. *Hence Your Enemies Are Already Consumed*

SLOKA 33. Therefore, arise! Become famous! Conquer your enemies! Enjoy a prosperous kingdom. These have been slain by me alone already. You will be the means merely, Arjuna.[33]

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[29]Karna.

[30]See Appendix I for details.

[31]Lit., Vishnu. See X:21.

[32]I.e., without your killing anyone.

[33]Lit., *Savyasachin*, O Left-Handed One.

SLOKA 34. Do not worry when you kill Drona and Bhishma and Jayadratha and Karna and even other heroes of war; for they have been slain by me already. Fight, and you will defeat your enemies in battle.

D. ARJUNA REGAINS CONFIDENCE

SLOKA 35. Hearing these words of Krishna,[34] Arjuna[35] joined his hands,[36] trembling. Saluting again, he spoke to Krishna, stammering, fearful, bowing.

SLOKA 36. Arjuna said: O Krishna,[37] the world is properly pleased and delighted with your magnificence. Frightened demons flee in all directions; and the congregations of the enlightened ones salute you.

SLOKA 37. And why should they not salute you, O Great One? You are magnificent. You are Brahman, the endless original source, the sustainer of all creation, the imperishable ultimate reality which constitutes both existence and non-existence.

SLOKA 38. You are the source of power, O Sourceless Spirit. You are the foundation of this universe. You are both the knower and that which is known. And you are the final goal and resting place. In you the universe has its location, O Infinite Presence.

SLOKA 39. You are the wind, the underworld, fire, the world order, the moon, the creator, and the first ancestor.[38] I salute and salute you a thousand times. And again and again I salute and salute you.

SLOKA 40. I salute you from in front. I salute you from behind. I salute you from all sides, for you are all. You are infinite power and boundless energy. You are omnipresent. Therefore you are all.

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[34]Lit., O Luxuriant One.

[35]Lit., *Kirita*, the Crowned One.

[36]I.e., in a prayer position.

[37]Lit., *Hrishikesha*, Master of the Senses.

[38]Lit., *Vayu, Yama, Agni, Varuna, Sashaka* (or *Chandra*), *Prajapati*

SLOKA 41. Ignorant of your greatness, and lacking judgment, and loving you, and regarding you as a friend, I have presumptuously called you "Dear Krishna", "Dear Yadava", "Dear Comrade".

SLOKA 42. And if in any way I have been irreverent in jesting about you, while at play or at rest or while sitting or eating, either by myself or in the company of others, O Krishna,[39] for that I ask your forgiveness O Infinite One.

SLOKA 43. You are the father of the universe, changing and unchanging. You are that which is worthy in this world, and its greatest teacher. There is no one equal to you. Where can there be found another who is greater than you even in all of the three worlds, O Matchless Producer.

SLOKA 44. Therefore, prostrating my body in reverence, I beg your pardon, O Praiseworthy Lord. Please, O God, forgive me; even as a father forgives his son and a friend excuses his friend, so regard me as dearly your own.

SLOKA 45. Having seen what has never been seen before, I was delighted, but now my mind has become fearful and distressed. Now show me your personified form again. Be merciful, O God of gods, Home of the Universe.

SLOKA 46. I desire to see you only as you were, with crown and mace and discus in your hand. Resume again that four-armed shape, O Thousand-Armed, O Shapeless Source of Endless Shapes.

SLOKA 47. Krishna speaks: Being kindly disposed toward you, Arjuna, I have revealed to you by my own yogic power the Ultimate Presence, resplendent, omnipresent, endless and uncaused, which no one else has ever seen before.

SLOKA 48. Neither by a study of the scriptures,[40] nor by

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and *Prapitamah* (great-grandfather), all deified cosmic principles.

[39]Lit., *Achyuta*, O Changeless One. Or, not fallen, solid firm; i.e., O Firmament.

[40]Lit., the *Vedas*.

performing Vedic sacrifices, nor by almsgiving, nor by ritual ceremonies, nor by severe austerities do I appear to other men in the world in such a manner as I have been seen by you, Arjuna.[41]

SLOKA 49. Do not be afraid and do not feel perplexed at having seen my aweful presence in this way. But now behold this my other form again, freed from fear and with a happy mind.

SLOKA 50. Sanjaya[42] said: Having spoken these words, Krishna[43] again presented his own form to Arjuna. And by again assuming his familiar form, the Great One[44] comforted him who had been afraid.

SLOKA 51. Arjuna said: Seeing this your familiar human form, O Krishna,[45] I am now calm and collected, and restored to my normal condition.

SLOKA 52. Krishna said: This form of mine which you have seen is very hard to see. Even the gods are always wanting to see it.

SLOKA 53. Neither by studying the scriptures, nor by austerities, nor by gifts, nor by ceremonial observances, can anyone see me in such a way as you have seen me.

SLOKA 54. Yet I can be seen in this way, Arjuna, by exclusive devotion. And being known as I am in reality, I can be embraced, Arjuna.[46]

SLOKA 55. He who seeks to do what is best for me, who regards me as ultimate, who is utterly devoted to me, freed from attachment, without enmity to any being, he comes to me, Arjuna.[47]

41Lit., *Kurupravira*, O Hero of the World.

42See XI: 9.

43Lit., the Omnipresent One.

44I.e., Krishna.

45Lit., O Destroyer of the World.

46Lit., O Harasser of Foes.

47Lit., O Son of Pandu.

CHAPTER XII | WHAT CAN MEN TRUST?

A. MANIFEST OR UNMANIFEST REALITY: WHICH IS BETTER?

SLOKA 1. Arjuna asked: Which of these then has best grasped the way to the goal of life, those who are always engaged in devotion to you[1] or those who appreciate the eternally unmanifest?

1. *Identity with Manifest: Greatest Assurance*

SLOKA 2. Krishna replied: Those who, having mentally embraced me, are ever-engaged in appreciating me, assured through perfect confidence, they must be regarded as most united with me.

2. *Identity with Unmanifest: Fullest Attainment*

SLOKA 3. But those who appreciate as ultimate the imperishable, the ineffable, the unmanifest, the omnipresent, the incomprehensible, the incessant source, the immutable, and the eternal,

SLOKA 4. Unresponsive to any sense appeals, enjoying tranquility under all conditions, accepting the goodness of all (kinds of) being, they fully achieve the end, i.e., my true self.

SLOKA 5. Of these (two ways), awareness of union with the unmanifest involves greater difficulty; for the unmanifest is very hard for human beings to realize.

B. WAYS OF TRUSTING THE MANIFEST

1. *Feel Identical with the Ultimate Manifestations*

SLOKA 6. But those who direct all of their efforts toward me,

[1]I.e., as manifest.

feeling identical with me as the ultimate, they appreciatively persist in valuing me alone, without any other, as the goal of life.

SLOKA 7. To those who keep their attention fixed in me, Arjuna,[2] I automatically become their saviour, rescuing them from the ocean of mortality and the cycle of rebirths.

SLOKA 8. Keep your attention fixed in me alone. Become consciously at home in me. After becoming at home in me alone, you will experience no uncertainty.

2. *Try to Feel Identical Repeatedly*

SLOKA 9. If you cannot tranquilly keep your mind fixed in me persistently, then try to reach me again and again by concentrating attention[3] on me, Arjuna.[4]

3. *Unselfishly Seek Good for God*

SLOKA 10. If by such repetition[5] you still cannot regard me as the ultimate goal of all efforts, then seek to do good for my sake. Doing this, you will gain success.

4. *Accept Need for Work without Desire for Reward*

SLOKA 11. If you cannot do even this, depending upon me for the goal,[6] then exert yourself but abandon all desire for rewards for your efforts.

C. PRACTICAL SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM

1. *Work for Results but Not for Rewards*

SLOKA 12. For, knowledge[7] is better than repeated ef-

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[2]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[3]Lit., *abhyasa-yoga*. The emphasis here is on repeated attainment of a temporary realization of intrinsic value in contrast with continuous retainment of persisting realization of such value.

[4]Lit., O Winner of Wealth. [5]I.e., *abhyasa-yoga*.

[6]I.e., as that for the sake of which you can direct your efforts.

[7]*Jnana*, clear and steady insight into the ultimate truth, which

forts.[8] *Dhyana*[9] is preferable to knowledge. One attains abandon ment of desires for rewards for efforts[10] from *Dhyana*. From such abandonment comes unending peace.[11]

2. *Details of Disinterested Behaviour*

SLOKA 13. Whoever has no aversion to anything, and is friendly and compassionate; whoever is unselfish and not conceited,[12] remaining indifferent to both pleasantness and unpleasantness, enduringly patient;

SLOKA 14. Whoever is fully satisfied in all conditions of life, and is self-directed with unswerving confidence; whoever has entrusted his mentality and attention to me, who is devoted to me; he is dear to me.[13]

SLOKA 15. Whoever neither tries to disturb the world nor is disturbed by the world, whoever is freed from anxieties and pride, impatience and fear, he is dear to me.

SLOKA 16. Whoever wants nothing, is clean, diligent, unconcerned, without passion, and who has surrendered all interest in changing things, who is devoted to me, he is dear to me.

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completely inclines one to acceptance.

[8]*Abhyasa*, or trying to reach me again and again.

[9]Intuitive, i.e., accomplished, appreciation of identity of self with ultimate reality.

[10]*Karma-phala-tyaga*, or *nishkama karma yoga*.

[11]Most commentators on this *sloka* seem unable to make sense of it. The almost irresistible tendency to regard it as an evaluative summary of the preceding six or ten slokas in some hierarchical order appears mistaken. Attempts at correlation end in failure. Rather, this *sloka* appears to interrelate several interdependent concepts, showing how each is better in its own way. The conclusion seems to be that enjoyment of the goal in the process of living (*karma-phala-tyaga*, or *nishkama karma yoga*) is best in the sense that it yields continuing bliss.

[12]Lit., "not-me-ish" and "not-I-am-ish."

[13]Or, "He is my own". Note parallel statements in the following *Slokas* 15, 16, 17, 19, and 20.

Sloka 17. Whoever neither likes nor dislikes, who neither regrets nor hankers, who has fully surrendered care about prosperity or misfortune, who is devoted, he is dear to me.

Sloka 18. Whoever is indifferent to both friends and enemies, to honour and dishonour, to cold and heat, to pleasure and displeasure, and is devoid of attachment,

Sloka 19. Whoever is indifferent to praise and blame, who remains silent, who is contented no matter what comes, who is not attached to any home and retains an imperturbable temperament, who is devoted, that man is dear to me.

Sloka 20. And all who pursue this eternal turth[14] as just described, having confidence in me as the ultimate reality, they are devotees who are very dear to me.

[14]*Dharma*. See Appendix II

CHAPTER XIII | MATTER AND SPIRIT

Questions Outlined[1]

SLOKA 0.[2] Arjuna asked: How to distinguish between matter and spirit, between the field (to be known) and the knower of the field, and between knowledge and that which is to be known, this I wish to learn, O Krishna.[3]

A. THE FIELD AND ITS KNOWER

SLOKA 1. Krishna said: Arjuna,[4] those who investigate things[5] call this body "the field"[6] and call that which is aware of it "the knower of the field."[7]

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[1]The present chapter is divided into two parts, the first consisting of *Slokas* 1-18, explores "the field and its knower", and the second, consisting of *Slokas* 19-33, distinguishes between "matter and spirit". *Slokas* 26 and 27 in Part B relate "the field and its knower" to "spirit and matter", as does *Sloka* 34, concluding the chapter.

[2]The present *sloka* appears to be a later interpolation. It does not occur in many editions and translations. This chapter, unlike most, begins with no opening question. Someone, observing this seeming deficiency, doubtless noted the contents of the chapter and formulated as obvious a question to which the contents serve as an answer. If this *sloka* were counted, the total number of *slokas* would come to 701 instead of the reputed 700.

[3]Lit., O Luxuriant One. [4]Lit., O Son of Kunti.

[5]Some persons have surpassed investigation.

[6]I.e., the arena, area, location, or that within or on which our life activities take place. "Life is a stage and we are the players."

[7]Or the observers of life's activities.

SLOKA 2. Think of me also, Arjuna,[8] as the knower of the field in all of the fields. But my knowledge must be regarded as including both the field and the knower of the field.

SLOKA 3. Now listen to me summarize what the field is, what its nature is, how it changes, how it arises, and who is its observer, and what are his capacities.

SLOKA 4. (These things) have been explained[9] in many different texts[10] in many different ways by many sages[11] at different times and places. Also they are discussed in the well-reasoned and conclusive *Brahma Sutras*.

1. *Constituents of the Field of Knowledge*

SLOKA 5.[12] The gross elements,[13] self-consciousness,[14] and also awareness,[15] primordial matter,[16] the ten organs[17] and the one organ,[18] and the five essences of sensation,[19]

SLOKA 6. Desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, perception,[20] consciousness,[21] and continuance, these, in sum, constitute what is called "the field and its changes".

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[8]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.

[9]Lit., sung.

[10]Lit., verses or metres.

[11]Lit., *rishis*.

[12]For explanation of this *sloka* see Appendix IV.

[13]Earth, water, fire, air, ether.

[14]*Ahamkara*.

[15]*Buddhi*.

[16]Lit., the unmanifest, usually interpreted as *prakriti*, matter.

[17]Eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, larynx, hands, feet, anus and organs of generation.

[18]The mind.

[19]Sounds, touch, form, taste, odour.

[20]Lit., the aggregate, which some interpret as the body, consisting of many parts held together, and some the unity of the field of objects preceived, including the body.

[21]Lit., *cetana*, consciousness in the sense of holding things together in attention; an experience-gestalt; a "specious present".

2. *Ways of Knowing*

SLOKA 7. Humility, sincerity, harmlessness, patience, honesty, appreciation of those who teach us, purity, persistence, self-control;

SLOKA 8. Unresponsiveness to serious attractions as well as absence of self-assertion; no avoidance of awareness of the evils accompanying birth, death, decrepitude, disease and pain;

SLOKA 9. Non-attachment, without clinging to wife, children, home and other (dear ones); perpetual mental tranquility in the face of both agreeable and disagreeable happenings;

SLOKA 10. Unwavering devotion to me without valuing anything else; retirement to solitary places, without interest in gregariousness;

SLOKA 11. Persistent awareness of one's self-integrity, and demonstrating[22] understanding of the nature of things as they really are. This[23] is called "knowledge". Whatever is contrary to it is "ignorance".

3. *The Nature of the Object of Knowledge*

SLOKA 12. I will explain that which constitutes the ultimate object of knowing, knowledge of which provides freedom from fears about death.[24] Ultimate reality,[25] which has no more ultimate source, is said to be neither Being[26] nor Non-Being.[27]

SLOKA 13. Its hands and feet are everywhere. Its eyes and heads and mouths are everywhere. Its ears are everywhere. It continues to include everything.

SLOKA 14. It appears in all of the sensuous qualities and yet

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[22]Lit., *darshna*, showing or teaching.
[23]All of the foregoing, i.e., characteristics listed in *Slokas* 7-11.
[24]Lit., by knowing which one enjoys immortality.
[25]Lit., *Brahman*.
[26]*Sat*.
[27]*Asat*.

it is devoid of all senses. It is joined to nothing, and yet it is the basis of everything. It is devoid of qualities,[28] and yet it experiences all qualities.

SLOKA 15. It is both inside and outside of all things, both unchanging and changing.[29] Because of its subtlety it is incomprehensible. It is both transcedent and immanent. And it is reality.

SLOKA 16. That which is to be known is without parts, and yet it exists in things as if divided into many parts; it is both the maintainer of all things and their producer and consumer.

SLOKA 17. It is that which shines through all the lights, yet it is said to be perfect darkness.[30]

4. *The Field and Its Knower are Identical*

SLOKA 17 (continued). It is both knowledge, the object of knowledge, and the goal of knowledge.[31] It persists in the centre of everything.

SLOKA 18. In this way, I have briefly explained the field (of experience, including the nature) of (both) knowing and that which is known. He, among those devoted to me, who comprehends this (explanation, thereby) acquires my own nature.

B. MATTER AND SPIRIT

1. *Characteristics Compared*

SLOKA 19. (Distinguishing between) matter and spirit,[32]

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[28]Lit., *gunas*. See Appendix V.

[29]Or inanimate and animate.

[30]Or, among lights, it is that light which is above (all) darkness. *Para* may mean "above" or "beyond" and "perfect" or "utter".

[31]Distinction between the field of objects known and the goal of life beyond the field seems intended.

[32]The Sanskrit terms, *prakriti* and *purusha*, here translated as "matter" and "spirit", can be understood fully only in terms of the early *Samkhya* scheme which appears to be both assumed and

envision both as without beginning; and view all structures and tendencies[33] as material in nature.

SLOKA 20. Matter is said to be the basis for effects, causes and causers.[34] Spirit is said to be the basis for awareness—of happiness and unhappiness.

SLOKA 21. Spirit, by remaining associated with matter, is aware of material processes.[35] Its being attracted by these processes is the cause of its continuing rebirths and deaths.

SLOKA 22. When spirit enters into body, it is supreme, and is also called the "supreme soul",[36] functioning as spectator, assenter, sustainer and as great lord.

2. *Ways of Comprehending*

SLOKA 23. He who comprehends spirit and matter together with its[37] processes, in this way, he is not reborn regardless of how he behaves.

SLOKA 24. Some may apprehend the self[38] by itself[38] by concentrating attention continuously upon[39] the self.[38] Others may seek to apprehend it by the path of understanding.[40] While still others may try to do so through efforts to produce good results.[41]

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partly repudiated through modification by Vyasa. "Matter" here includes body, mind and consciousness. "Spirit" is that ultimately unmanifest whole which is neutrally inclusive of everything, yet which functions in each person (*purusha*) as the principle of wholeness or soul.

[33] Lit., *gunas*.

[34] Reference here is made to causers as agents or initiators, as when a person feels that he freely wills to think or act in any way, to the effects as consequence of such willing, and to causes as any action or means by which the effects are brought about.

[35] Lit., *gunas*. [36] *Paramatman*.

[37] I.e., matter's. [38] Soul, *atman*.

[39] I.e., through intuitive self-apprehension of soul in isolation (*dhyana*).

[40] *Samkhya yoga*.

[41] *Karma yoga*.

SLOKA 25. And others, although not comprehending, appreciate (the description of spirit and matter as enduringly distinct) when hearing about it from others; they too may truly transcend mortality by having faith in what they have heard.

SLOKA 26. Realize, Arjuna,[42] that whatever comes into being in any way, whether as living or as inanimate, results from association of the field with the knower of the field.[43]

SLOKA 27. He who preceives the Supreme God as embodied in all things, and as not perishing when they perish, he (truly) comprehends.

SLOKA 28. Envisioning God as equally omnipresent everywhere, he refuses to let the self harm itself. Thereby he approaches the ultimate goal.

SLOKA 29. Everything that happens, including efforts to produce good results, is caused by matter alone. He who realizes that his self[44] causes nothing, he comprehends.

SLOKA 30. When one sees things with so many different natures all remaining united, and yet being so spread out, then he approaches ultimate reality.

3. *How Related?*

SLOKA 31. The ultimate self,[45] being beginningless and without processes of change,[46] is therefore everlasting. Even though it dwells within a body, Arjuna,[47] it neither causes nor is affected.

SLOKA 32. Just as space subtly pervades everything without being affected, so the self dwells throughout the body without being affected.

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[42]Lit., O Best of the Bharatas.

[43]This sloka and the next appear to relate "matter and spirit" to "the field and its knower".

[44]*Atman*, soul.

[45]*Paramatman*, supreme soul.

[46]Lit., without *gunas*.

[47]Lit., O Son of Kunti.

SLOKA 33. Just as one sun lights up this whole created world, so by occupying the field, that which does so lights up the whole of creation, Arjuna.[48]

SLOKA 34. Those who can envision thus the distinction between the field and the knower of the field, and who can envision what it is to be freed from matter, they are tending toward the ultimate.

[48]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.

CHAPTER XIV | THE THREE GUNAS

A. THE BEST KIND OF KNOWLEDGE

SLOKA 1. Krishna said: Once more I shall explain that knowledge which is most ultimate among the best kinds of knowledge. By knowing this all of the sages[1] attain final success hereafter.

SLOKA 2. By having faith in this knowledge, they may approach possession of my nature, and they are neither born in any process of creation nor suffer from any process of dissolution.

1. *How Things Are Related to the Physical Universe*

SLOKA 3. The whole physical universe[2] is my cosmic womb, and I quicken it with the beginnings of life. In this way does birth come to all things, Arjuna.[3]

SLOKA 4. Of all these kinds of things which are born in wombs, Arjuna,[4] the whole physical universe is the cosmic womb and I am the impregnating father.

SLOKA 5. In this way *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* come into being as nature's[5] *gunas*.[6] They enslave in body the embodied forever, Arjuna.[7]

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[1]Lit., *muni*.
[2]Lit., *prakriti*.
[3]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.
[4]Lit., O Son of Kunti.
[5]Lit., *prakriti*. See discussion in Appendix IV.
[6]I.e., tendencies, forces, tropisms, "qualities". See Appendix V.
[7]Lit., O Mighty-Armed.

2. *Comparison of the Gunas*

SLOKA 6. Of these (three), *sattva*, being perfect, retains clarity and goodness. It disposes one to be drawn toward happiness and wisdom, Arjuna.[8]

SLOKA 7. *Rajas* arouses in the self tendencies toward thirst and greed. It enslaves embodied ones to the attractions of desires for reward, Arjuna.[9]

SLOKA 8. But *tamas* originates in ignorance, stupefying all embodied beings. It enslaves one to heedlessness, laziness and slothfulness, Arjuna.[10]

SLOKA 9. *Sattva* yields happiness, *rajas* stimulates ambition,[11] while *tamas*, veiling the truth, merely gives way to heedlessness, Arjuna.[12]

SLOKA 10. *Sattva* prevails by dominating over *rajas* and *tamas*, *tamas* (by dominating) over *rajas* and *sattva*, and so *rajas* over *sattva* and *tamas* also, Arjuna.[13]

SLOKA 11. When wisdom clearly radiates through all avenues of the body, then one should see *sattva* alone as thereby prevailing.

SLOKA 12. Greed, aggressiveness, ambitious struggle for rewards, anxiety, craving—these arise when *rajas* thrives, Arjuna.[14]

SLOKA 13. Gloom, stagnation, heedlessness and delusion—these result when *tamas* gets the upper hand, Arjuna.[15]

SLOKA 14. When *sattva* prevails and the embodied one meets death, then he ascends to the perfect realm of those who envision the ultimate.

SLOKA 15. Meeting death still stirred by *rajas*, one is reborn

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[8]Lit., Anagha, O Happy One (i.e., without an ache or trouble).

[9]Lit., O Son of Kunti.

[10]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.

[11]And anxiety, or the state of mind inherent in desiring and putting forth effort to attain rewards.

[12]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.

[13]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.

[14]Lit., O Best of the Bharatas.

[15]Lit., O Son of the Kurus.

among those committed to working for rewards. So when dying immersed in *tamas*, one is reborn in a slothful womb.

SLOKA 16. They say that purity from well-intended efforts results from *sattva*, misery results from *rajas* and ignorance results from *tamas*.

SLOKA 17. *Sattva* yields understanding, *rajas* stimulates greed and *tamas* begets ignorance and heedless stupidity.

SLOKA 18. Things endowed with *sattva* tend to rise. Things compelled by *rajas* continue in the middle. Things pervaded by *tamas*, the worst *guna*, tend to descend.

3. *Gunas the Only Causes*

SLOKA 19. When one sees that no causes other than the *gunas* exist, and realizes what is more ultimate than the *gunas*, then he achieves my own condition.

B. TRANSCENDING THE GUNAS

1. *They Should Be Transcended*

SLOKA 20. Whenever an embodied one transcends these three *gunas*, (which are) the generators of bodily processes, then, by becoming freed from birth and death, decrepitude and misery, he enjoys immortality.

2. *Characteristics of Transcendence*

SLOKA 21. Arjuna asked: What are the characteristics is of anyone who has transcended these three *gunas*, Krishna?[16] How does he conduct himself? And how does he transcend these three *gunas*?

SLOKA 22. Krishna replied: Regardless of whether perfection is clearly appreciated or whether ambition to produce results is stirred or whether one sinks into stupid slothfulness,[17] Arjuna,[18] he neither disapproves their joint

[16]Lit., *Prabho*, Lord.

[17]These conditions caused by *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas qunas* respectively.

[18]Lit., O Son of Pandu.

operations nor hopes that they will cease operating.

SLOKA 23. He remains indifferent, like one who is unaffected by the *gunas*. Believing that only the *gunas* cause effects, he abides persistently without motivation.

SLOKA 24. Being self-sustained, he is indifferent to misery and happiness, and indifferent to dirt or rocks or gold. Being self-sufficient, he regards both loved ones and the unloving in the same manner, and both humiliation and self-esteem in the same way.

SLOKA 25. He accepts honour and shame with indifference, and treats friend and foe alike. Having given up all ambition, he may be said to have transcended the *gunas*.

SLOKA 26. And he who unwaveringly serves me with devotion[19] transcends the *gunas* and is suited to become one with ultimate reality.

SLOKA 27. I am the home of ultimate reality, of immortality, of imperishability, of everlastingness and dependable order, of happiness and perfection.

[19]Lit., *bhakti yoga*.

CHAPTER XV | ETERNAL AND TEMPORAL: HOW RELATED?

A. ANALOGY OF THE ASHVATTHA TREE

SLOKA 1. Krishna said: People talk about an everlasting Ashvattha tree, having its roots above and its branches below. Its leaves are the (Vedic) hymns, and he who knows it knows the *Vedas*.[1]

SLOKA 2. Both downward and upward extend its branches, expressions of the *gunas*, appearing in the panorama of the things we see. And downward spread its roots, which appear in the human realm as desires for rewards.

SLOKA 3. Its form is not to be seen as such, nor its end, nor its beginning, nor its substance. (Yet) this securely rooted Ashvattha tree can be chopped away by the durable weapon of indifference.

B. ONE SHOULD SEEK THE ETERNAL GOAL

SLOKA 4. Then one should seek out that goal from which, once reached, one does not return again. And only there will he find that original self from which the apparent profusion first emerged.

SLOKA 5. Freed from pride and delusion, victorious over

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[1]The precise meaning of the allegory expressed in this *sloka* seems to have escaped all interpreters. A study of the profusion of attempts leaves only confusion. Yet the general import is clear. The sacred pipal tree symbolizes cosmic creation, its attractive pleasures and our tendency to respond to their appeal.

interest in evil, committed to self-adherence,[2] completely liberated from desires, freed from tensions between opposites—known as happiness and misery—the undeluded reach that everlasting goal.

SLOKA 6. There the sun never shines, nor the moon, nor fire. There is my ultimate home, from which, once reached, no one departs.

C. RELATION OF ETERNAL TO TEMPORAL

1. *Only Part of the Eternal Becomes Temporal*

SLOKA 7. Only a portion of my eternal living being comes to life in the world, acquiring a material substantially with a mind and the five senses.

2. *The Temporal is Only Temporary*

SLOKA 8. Whatever body God acquires, that he also outgrows. Having accepted its hospitality, he moves on, just as a breeze blows away from each place.

3. *The Eternal Permeates the Temporal*

SLOKA 9. Acquiring eyes and ears, touch and taste and organs of smell and thought, he enjoys whatever appears.

4. *The Eternal is Invisible to the Temporal*

SLOKA 10. And when he goes or stays, or enjoys association with the *gunas*, the deluded do not see him, (but) the wise[3] see him.

SLOKA 11. And Yogins who make the effort can see him dwelling within their selves. However, incompetent selves, even though they try, cannot see him (of whom they are) unaware.

5. *The Eternal is Source and Sustainer of the Temporal*

SLOKA 12. That light which is given out first from the sun,

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[2]Or adherence to the ultimate self. See VIII: 1, 3.

[3]Lit., those who see with the eye of knowledge.

illuminating the whole of creation, which appears also in the moon and in fires—know that light to be mine.

SLOKA 13. And penetrating the earth, I sustain all things by my power. And I nourish all the plants (i.e., flowers and herbs), (even) becoming the tasty juice of the soma plant.[4]

6. *The Eternal is Omnipresent in the Temporal*

SLOKA 14. By becoming the flame of life, I enter into the bodies of animate beings, being present in their very inhalings and exhalings, and in the preparation of foods of all kinds.[5]

7. *The Eternal is Both Knower and Known*

SLOKA 15. And I am embedded in the hearts of all. Knowledge, memory and forgetting depend upon me. And in all that is known, only I am both the creator and the goal of knowledge and also the knower of what is known.

D. THE ETERNAL VERSUS THE EVERLASTING

1. *Time Includes Both Unlasting and Everlasting Beings*

SLOKA 16. There are two kinds of spirits[6] in the world, the perishable and also the imperishable. All things are perishable. The imperishable is said to be immutable.

2. *The Eternal Appears in Time as Everlasting*

SLOKA 17. But the highest being is still different. This may be called the ultimate self, which, as an everlasting God, pervades and sustains the whole universe.[7]

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[4]Fermented soma juice is well known as the ancient intoxicant, traditionally inspiring men and gods alike.

[5]Lit., foods of the four kinds, commonly interpreted as those which are chewed, sucked, licked or drunk.

[6]Lit., *purushas*.

[7]Lit., the three worlds.

3. *But the Eternal Transcends Both Unlasting and Everlasting Time*

SLOKA 18. Since I transcend the perishable and am higher than the imperishable, therefore I am that ultimate reality to be known in the world and also its knower—the highest self.

4. *Therefore Seek the Eternal*

SLOKA 19. He who knows me as the highest self is thus undeluded. Knowing thus completely, he loves me with his whole being, Arjuna.[8]

SLOKA 20. So, Arjuna,[9] I have revealed to you the most profound teachings. Knowing these, one becomes enlightened and does willingly whatever needs to be done, Arjuna.[10]

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[8]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.
[9]Lit., O Happy One.
[10]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.

CHAPTER XVI | EVIL WAYS OF LIVING

A. GOOD AND EVIL TRAITS COMPARED

1. *Good Traits*

SLOKA 1. Krishna said: Fearlessness, purity of heart, perserverance in the quest for knowledge, generosity, self-control, reciprocity, studiousness, austerity, honesty,

SLOKA 2. Harmlessness, veracity, freedom from anger, abandonment, tranquility, freedom from disparagement, compassion for all beings, uncovetousness, gentleness, modesty, constancy,

SLOKA 3. Brightness, forbearance, endurance, cleanliness, freedom from malice and excessive pride—these are the traits of those with good[1] characters, Arjuna,[2]

2. *Evil Traits*

SLOKA 4. Hypocrisy, arrogance, conceit, anger, insolence and ignorance are endowments of those with evil's[3] character, Arjuna.[4]

3. *Comparison*

SLOKA 5. The good characteristics lead to freedom, while the evil ones lead to bondage. Do not worry, Arjuna,[5] for you are endowed with a good character.

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[1]Lit., shining, divine or godlike.

[2]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.

[3]Lit., *asuras*, evil spirits or demons.

[4]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[5]Lit., O Son of Pandu.

B. DESCRIPTION OF EVIL BEINGS

SLOKA 6. Two kinds of beings emerge in this world, the good and also the evil. I have described the good in some detail. Now hear from me about the evil, Arjuna.[6]

1. *Their Attitudes*

SLOKA 7. Evil creatures do not know what to do and what not to do. Neither cleanliness nor appropriate conduct nor truthfulness are to be found in them.

SLOKA 8. They say that creation is without reality, without substantiality, without God. Things exist together without being related to each other. What can be the cause of creation except desire?

SLOKA 9. By accepting this view, these futile selves, born with little insight, impetuously desire results, become enemies of the world, promoting its destruction.

SLOKA 10. Impelled by insatiable desires, imbued with hypocrisy, conceit and intoxication, suffering from delusion, gripped by unrealistic views, they promote their evil commitments.

SLOKA 11. Engrossed in innumerable wants, stopping only with death, they believe desires and satisfactions to be the ultimate values. They are occupied with so much; in this way they remain unattentive.[7]

SLOKA 12. Ensnared by the lure of hundreds of anticipations, fully committed to desires and frustrations, they strive to gratify their passionate desires and to acquire wealth by devious methods.

SLOKA 13. "I gained this today. I shall get more tomorrow.[8] This is mine, and that will be mine also. I shall soon be wealthy."

SLOKA 14. "I have killed this enemy. I will kill others also.

[6]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[7]I.e., unaware of the ultimate truth.

[8]Lit., "I shall attain my heart's desire; I shall realize my dreams."

I am a lord. I am prosperous. I am successful, powerful and happy."

SLOKA 15. "I am rich and well situated. Who else is my equal? I will hustle. I will enslave. I will make money." In this way are the ignorant misled.

2. *Their Fate*

SLOKA 16. Excited by numerous interests, captured by snares of delusion, enticed by love of enjoyment, they end in wretched torment.

SLOKA 17. Self-assured, pigheaded, puffed with pride and delirious with luxuries, they pretend to reciprocate, hypocritically disregarding primeval principles.

SLOKA 18. Inspired by egoism, prowess, pride, greed and anger, these drunken abusers rebel against me, the ultimate self dwelling within their bodies.

SLOKA 19. These cruel enemies, degraded among men in this world, I repeatedly subject to rebirth in the really degenerate ungodly wombs.

SLOKA 20. Nurtured in such ungodly wombs, stupefied in birth after birth, they thus wander perpetually in a homeless condition without ever reaching me, Arjuna.[9]

C. AVOID EVIL WAYS

1. *Three Ways To Be Avoided*

SLOKA 21. There are three was to hellish self-destruction, namely, desire, anger and greed. Therefore reject these three.

SLOKA 22. The man who is freed from these three ways to human degeneration, Arjuna,[10] does what is good for his soul and thus reachest the ultimate goal.

2. *Follow Philosophical Principles*

SLOKA 23. He who disregards the principles of wisdom and

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[9]Lit., O Son of Kunti.
[10]Lit., O Son of Kunti.

follows his lustful impulses, he will attain neither success nor happiness nor the ultimate goal.

SLOKA 24. Therefore let philosophy guide you to assurance as to what to do and what not to do. Having discovered what philosophical principles prescribe, then endeavour to do whatever you ought.

CHAPTER XVII | THREE KINDS OF FAITH

A. THREE KINDS OF CONFIDENCE

1. *Caused by the Three Gunas*
SLOKA 1. Arjuna asked: What is the lot of those who disregard philosophical principles[1] and yet confidently undertake to do good deeds, O Krishna? Should it be called *sattva, rajas* or *tamas?*
SLOKA 2. Krishna replied: There are three kinds of confidence, each endowed with its own nature, namely, the *sattvic*, the *rajasic* and the *tamasic*. Let me tell you about them.
SLOKA 3. Arjuna,[2] the confidence of each is shaped according to his natural disposition. A person's confidence is an integral part of him. The kind of confidence he has determines the kind of being that he is.

2. *The Three Compared*
SLOKA 4. *Sattva* inclines men to have faith in what is good.[3] *Rajas* impels men to have faith in what is aggressive.[4] *Tamas* disposes men to have faith in what is degenerate.[5]

3. *Characteristics of Evil Faiths*
SLOKA 5. Some men torture themselves with stringent

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[1]Lit., precepts taught in the *shastras* or revered scriptures.
[2]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.
[3]Lit., the devas, shining forces or gods.
[4]Lit., *yakshas* and *rakshasas*, spirits and demons. See X:23.
[5]Lit., *pretas*, ghosts, and hoards of *bhutas*, exhuasted plants, e.g., garbage.

austerities not in accord with philosophical principles. Attracted by pretense and arrogance, impelled by the forces of desire and frustration,

SLOKA 6. Torturing all of the organs of the bodies in which they dwell, and disregardful of me (who am) also dwelling within their bodies, these, you can be sure, are committed to confidence in evil.

B. OTHER EXAMPLES OF THREE KINDS

SLOKA 7. Likewise, all of the foods which we ikes are of three kinds. Also (three kinds) of endeavours,[6] restraints[7] and gifts.[8] Let me explain their difference.

1. *Three Kinds of Food*

SLOKA 8. Foods which improve our longevity, our vitality, our strength, our health, our happiness and our cheerfulness, which are delicious, tender, nourishing and agreeable, are preferred by (those with) *sattvic* temperaments.

SLOKA 9. Foods which are bitter, sour, salty, very hot, spicy, dry and burnt are preferred by (those with) *rajasic* temperaments.

SLOKA 10. Foods which are stale, tasteless, smelly, spoiled,

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[6]Lit., *yajna*, or attempt to initiate reciprocation of good results; commonly translated as "offerings" or "sacrifices". Looking forward, we choose to interpret the meanings of these three terms much more broadly than those who look backward to the ancient *Vedas* for their meanings. See also III:9-15; XVII:27-28; XVIII 3, 5.

[7]Lit., *tapas*, austerities, or attempts to initiate reciprocation of good results by first enduring hardships. See XVII:14-19, 27, 28; XVIII:3, 5.

[8]Lit., *dana* (etymologically related to the English word "donation"), may mean gifts of all sorts. In the *Vedas*, "gifts" often meant things of specific kinds given in accordance with prescribed rules. See XVII:20-22, 27-28; XVIII:3, 5.

left-over and dirty are preferred by (those with) *tamasic* temperaments.

2. *Three Kinds of Endeavours*

SLOKA 11. Endeavours pursued without anxiety for results, which are undertaken because they are in accordance with principle, and pursued with no other end in mind, and carried out with assurance—these are *sattvic*.

SLOKA 12. Endeavours pursued with the rewards in mind and also only pretended interest in the objects, these, Arjuna,[9] should be known as *rajasic*.

SLOKA 13. Endeavours pursued without a plan, without willingness to do whatever is needed, without following established patterns, without skill, and without strong confidence are called *tamasic*.[10]

3. *Three Kinds of Restraints*

SLOKA 14. Bowing in respect to the gods, to worthy men,[11] teachers and the wise, and embodying cleanliness, uprightness, continence and harmlessness—these may be called bodily restraints.[12]

SLOKA 15. Speech which troubles no one, which is truthful, which is agreeably helpful and which is carefully enun-

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[9]Lit., O Best of the Bharatas.

[10]A more traditional translation of this sloka: Sacrifice which is made without following scriptural rules, without distributing food, without chanting hymns, without paying fees (to the officiating priests), and without strong conviction, is called *tamasic*.

[11]Lit., twice-born. I.e., those belonging to the three upper castes "whose second life is said to take place when they are initiated into spiritual life with investiture of the sacred thread". Sometimes refers only to Brahmins. Swami Nikhilananda, *The Bhagavad Gita*, p. 58. See also I:7, in Appendix I.

[12]Lit., *tapas*, usually translated as "austerities," sometimes as "penance," but it does not necessarily involve the idea of penitence, repentance or paying back, for one may deliberately seek to suffer first so that he may reap rewards afterward.

ciated habitually[13]—this may be called vocal restraint.

SLOKA 16. Mental serenity, gentleness, silence, self-control and tending toward complete purity—this may be called mental restraint.

SLOKA 17. When the (foregoing) three kinds of restraints are practiced by men with supreme confidence, without hankering for rewards and by Yoga, they are praised as *sattvic.*

SLOKA 18. When these restraints are merely pretended, and really done for the sake of praise, honour and respect, they are pronounced *rajasic,* insecure and temporary.

SLOKA 19. When these restraints are suffered as punishment by a self overwhelmed with delusion, or endured for the sake of harming others, they are denounced as *tamasic.*

4. *Three Kinds of Gifts*

SLOKA 20. That gift which is given without expecting anything in return, or because it should be given, and at the appropriate place and time, and to a deserving person, that gift is remembered as *sattvic.*

SLOKA 21. That gift which is given grudgingly or for the sake of earning gratitude, or especially in seeking rewards, that gift is recalled as *rajasic.*

SLOKA 22. That gift which is given to an undeserving person at the wrong place and time, and contemptuously and insultingly, that is condemned as *tamasic.*

5. *Three Names for Ultimate Reality*

SLOKA 23. Ultimate reality is called[14] by three different names: *Aum,*[15] *Tat*[16] and *Sat*[17] By these (three names)

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[13]Lit., studious practice in recitation.

[14]Lit., *smriti,* remembered, recalled or kept in mind.

[15]*Aum* or *Om* also means "Yes" or "Amen" or complete assent, confidence, faith, freedom from fear, and hence most holy. See VIII:13; IX:17.

[16]*Tat,* that, thatness, suchness, so-ness, truth.

[17]*Sat,* being; appears in *sattva* as stability or permanence of being.

the Brahmins first entitled the Vedic ceremonies.[18]

SLOKA 24. This is the reason why pronouncing *Aum* accompanies acts of endeavoring, giving or restraining, and is expressed whenever principles are appealed to by those who speak about ultimate reality.[19]

SLOKA 25. Likewise, *Tat* refers to the acts of endeavoring, restraining, giving and whatever else is done without aiming at rewards by those who long for freedom.

SLOKA 26. Similarly, *Sat* is used to mean continuing in existence and to mean continuing goodness. *Sat* is a word used also to name praiseworthy efforts, Arjuna.[20]

SLOKA 27. So *Sat* applies to endeavoring, restraining and giving as well as to just remaining in existence. And in the same way *Sat* may be used to name even efforts to produce results which are done for the sake of *Tat*.[21]

C. CONCLUSION

Confidence is Necessary to Being

SLOKA 28. And so, whatever is done or endured without confidence, whether it be offering, donating or restraining, is called *Asat*,[22] and not *Tat* whether here or hereafter, Arjuna.[23]

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[18]Or *Vedas* and ceremonies (*yajna*). Scholars agree that the second half of this sloka is unclear. Interpretations vary.

[19]Lit., *Bhramavadin*, or one who uses words, sentences or theories to describe and appreciate *Brahman*.

[20]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[21]I.e., for their own sake or as ends-in-themselves.

[22]Lit., Non-being, which also conveys the meaning of not continuing in existence, not continuing to be good and being not praiseworthy. See XIII:12 for a subtler view of the relation of *Sat* to *Asat*.

[23]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

CHAPTER XVIII | SUCCESS THROUGH CONFIDENCE

SUCCESS THROUGH CONFIDENCE

A. RENUNCIATION OR ABANDONMENT?

1. *Distinction between them*

SLOKA 1. Arjuna asked: O Krishna,[1] I would like to know the real difference between renunciation[2] and abandonment.[3]

2. *Distinction Explained: Effort versus Reward*

SLOKA 2. Krishna replied: The ascetics regard renunciation as giving up all desire to exert *effort* which will bring rewards. Those able to discriminate clearly speak of abandonment as giving up all interest in *rewards* of such effort.

3. *Disagreement about What Should Be Given Up*

SLOKA 3. Some thinkers assert that all efforts to produce results should be abandoned as evil, but others claim

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[1]Lit., O Mighty-Armed, O Master of the Senses, and *Kesinisudana* (O Slayer of Kesin, an *Asura*).

[2]*Sannyasa.* See VI:1, 2.

[3]*Tyagasa.* Both terms, *sannyasa* and *tyagasa*, appear to have the same meaning, i.e., letting go, giving up, abandoning or renouncing (all claim to or interest in). Yet there is a subtle distinction essential to Krishna's view which is not clear from the traditional meanings of the English words "renunciation" and "abandonment", so the meanings intended must be gathered from the following discussion.

that efforts to produce results by reciprocation,[4] by gifts[5] and by restraints[6] should not be abandoned in this way.

4. *Three Kinds of Ābandonment*

SLOKA 4. Arjuna,[7] listen to my conclusion about this matter of abandonment. Abandonment may best be described as being of three kinds.[8]

5. *But Efforts Should Not Be Abandoned*

SLOKA 5. Efforts to produce results through reciprocation, gifts and restraint should not be abandoned, but they should indeed be exerted. Those who are thoughtful regard reciprocating, giving and restraining as really ways to freedom from evil.

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[4]*Yajna*, translated as "willingness to act on the principle of reciprocity" in III:9-16; IV:11-33 and VIII:4 and as "endeavour" in XVIII:7, 11-13, 24, 25, 27 and 28. Commonly translated as "sacrifice" in contexts picturing men dealing with gods or cosmic powers, this term might also be translated as "investment". "Reciprocation" here means not merely giving back in proportion to what one has received but also deliberate use of the principle of reciprocity by intending to initiate its operation, or by "endeavouring". One may first give, in order that he may receive. Although reciprocation, gifts and restraints appear to be treated on an equal level in the texts, the author suggests that both gifts and restraints may be regarded as forms of endeavour to invest in the principle of reciprocity for the purpose of obtaining results.

[5]The term "gifts" appears to be used in a very broad sense, including offering your services in whatever way an occasion requires. See XVII:7, 20-22, 24, 25, 27 and 28.

[6]See XVII:14-19. All three of these terms, "endeavours", "gifts" and "restraints", appear in XVII:7, 25-25, 27, 28 and in XVIII: 3, 5.

[7]Lit., *Bharatasottama*, O Highest of the Bharatas, and *Purusavyaghra*, O Personified Tiger.

[8]These three kinds follow the classification of the three *gunas*. See *Slokas* 8-10 below. See Appendix V.

6. *Attachment to Rewards Should Be Abandoned*

SLOKA 6. But also such efforts to produce results should be exerted while abandoning attachment to rewards. This belief, Arjuna,[9] is my final conclusion.

7. *Abandonment of Necessary Efforts: Tamasic*

SLOKA 7. But renunciation of necessary efforts is not right. Complete abandonment of these (efforts) results from delusion and is most properly called *tamasic.*

8. *Abandonment of Painful Efforts: Rajasic*

SLOKA 8. Thus he who abandons only those efforts which are unpleasant, resulting from bodily suffering or from fear, he, by exerting *rajasic* abandonment, does not really obtain the rewards of abandonment.

9. *Abandonment of Attachment to Rewards: Sattvic*

SLOKA 9. Thus one should exert only that effort which is necessary, Arjuna, at the same time abandoning attachment to rewards. Such abandonment is considered *sattvic.*

SLOKA 10. He who is neither annoyed with unpleasant efforts nor delighted by pleasant efforts, his abandonment is pervaded by *sattva.* He is intelligent, an eliminator of doubts.

10. *Impossible to Abandon Efforts Completely*

SLOKA 11. Efforts to bring about results can never be completely abandoned by embodied beings. Yet he who abandons interest in the results of his efforts may be called a (true) abandoner.

11. *Three Kinds of Results*

SLOKA 12. The results of efforts to produce results are of three kinds: those sought after, those which come unsought, and those partly sought and partly unsought. These become

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[9]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

actualized hereafter for him who refuses to abandon, but not for the renouncer.

B. FIVE CAUSES OF EFFORTS

SLOKA 13. Arjuna,[10] learn from me the five causes which the wise[11] claim bring about all efforts to produce results:

1. *Body, Volition, Organs, Functions, Energies*[12]

SLOKA 14. The body,[13] volition,[14] the various organs of the body,[15] the various ways of behaving,[16] and the (various kinds of) energies.[17]

2. *These, Not Self, Cause Results*

SLOKA 15. Whatever effort, right or wrong, to produce results is exerted by men, whether through thinking or speaking or acting, these five are its causes.

SLOKA 16. Thus that person who, lacking adequate insight, sees only his self as agent, that fool fails to see (correctly).

3. *Hence, Abandon Free Will or Egoism*

SLOKA 17. He whose nature does not produce egoism, whose enlightenment remains undimmed, even though he destroys this world, he neither kills nor is guilty.

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[10]Lit., O Mighty-Armed.

[11]Lit., *Samkhya*. See XIII:17.

[12]These words must be regarded as only rough equivalents for the Sanskrit terms.

[13]I.e., the stable location of life's activities. The body has its own tendencies to continue to exist; e.g., as in the instinct for survival.

[14]Lit., agency, doer or actor.

[15]I.e., instruments of action, each of which has its own nature and way of functioning.

[16]I.e., kinds of movements, activities or functions, including the abilities and tendencies or propensities to move or function.

[17]Lit., *devas*, gods, powers, forces. Sometimes interpreted as

C. THREE KINDS OF CAUSES

SLOKA 18. The knower, what is known and knowing are the three contributors to impelling efforts to produce results. Likewise, the agent,[18] the effort[19] and the instruments of action[20] are the three participants in efforts to produce results.

D. THREE KINDS OF KNOWING, EFFORT AND AGENT

SLOKA 19. Knowing, effort and agent are also of three sorts as differentiated by the *gunas*. Listen also to a careful exposition classifying them according to the *gunas*.

1. *Three Kinds of Knowledge*

SLOKA 20. That knowledge by which one sees a single everlasting being in all things, as continuous in the (apparently) discontinuous, should be known as *sattvic*.

SLOKA 21. But that knowledge which interprets the (apparently) many things of various kinds as (really) different, believing (this to be true of) all things, such knowledge should be know as *rajasic*.

SLOKA 22. And (one) who is convinced, without reason, (by his knowledge) of some single thing, without either substance or value or significance, that (he knows) everything [21] his (knowledge) is called *tamasic*.

2. *Three Kinds of Effort*

SLOKA 23. Effort which is necessary yet is exerted without attachment, without anxiety or fear, without interest in reward, that is called *sattvic*.

SLOKA 24. Effort which is exerted by those desirous of rewards,

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forces beyond our control; i.e., fate, destiny, providence or chance.

[18]Volition. Same as 14 (2).

[19]Lit., *karma*.

[20]The various organs of the body. Same as 14 (3).

[21]Lit., as being (knowledge of) the whole.

or by one who is proud or who goes to great trouble, that is called *rajasic.*

SLOKA 25. Effort which arises from ignorance, unmindful of consequences, such as destruction or injury, or of responsibility, that is called *tamasic.*

3. *Three Kinds of Agents*

SLOKA 26. An agent is called *sattvic* when he is freed from association, is without self-assertion, is dedicated to endurance and suffused with confidence and is unaffected by either success or failure.

SLOKA 27. An agent is judged to be *rajasic* when he is passionately aroused in pursuit of rewards for his efforts, greedy, aggressive,[22] disregardful of morality and perpetually writhing with thrills and grief.

SLOKA 28. An agent is called *tamasic* when he is unsteady, vulgar, stubborn, deceitful, malicious, lazy, despondent and procrastinating.

E. THREE KINDS OF INSIGHT AND CONFIDENCE

SLOKA 29. And now, Arjuna,[23] hear still more details of my explanation. Insight[24] and confidence[25] also are divided into three kinds in accordance with the *gunas.*

1. *Three Kinds of Insight*

SLOKA 30. Insight which understands being both aroused and unaroused, in need of acting and without need for action, afraid and fearless, bound and free, such is *sattvic,* Arjuna.[26]

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[22]Lit., violent-spirited or cruel-hearted.

[23]Lit., O Winner of Wealth.

[24]Lit., *buddhi,* enlightenment, understanding, or the agency which becomes conscious. See *Slokas* 30-32 below.

[25]See *Slokas* 33-35 below.

[26]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

SLOKA 31. Insight which fails to discern appropriately between order and chaos[27] and between what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, such is *rajasic*, Arjuna.[28]

SLOKA 32. Insight which is shrouded by *tamas* mistakes order for chaos and misinterprets everything. Hence it is *tamasic*, Arjuna.[29]

2. *Three Kinds of Confidence*

SLOKA 33. That confidence[30] through which the mind, life and body and their functions are sustained, and that confidence with which the goal of life is pursued[31] unwaveringly, is *sattvic*, Arjuna.[32]

SLOKA 34. But that confidence by which morality (order), love (desire) and wealth (goods)[33] are sustained, Arjuna, and that confidence which feels assured in its hankering for rewards, are *rajasic*, Arjuna.[34]

SLOKA 35. That confidence with which the foolish man fails to discard sleep, fear, grief, despair and even hilarity, is *tamasic*, Arjuna.[35]

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[27]Lit., *dharma* and *adharma*. See Appendix II and Ch. IV, footnotes 11 and 12.

[28]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[29]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[30]Lit., *dhrti*, meaning steadfastness, endurance, persistence, fortitude, conviction, trust, belief, faith. Like the term *shraddha*, faith, confidence (see XVII:1-2, 28 and III:31), it connotes concrete embodiment of one's attitude in one's way of living.

[31]Lit., *yoga*.

[32]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[33]These three, *dharma*, *karma* and *artha*, are typically idealized as temporal values in Hindu culture. The fourth, *mukti* or *moksha*, is regarded as eternal, except for a few rare souls who achieve complete liberation from worldly disturbances in their present life, whose condition is called *jivanmukti*.

[34]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[35]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

F. THREE KINDS OF HAPPINESS

SLOKA 36. Next, Arjuna,[36] let me tell you about three kinds of happiness. By following this (advice), you will banish misery and experience peace.

SLOKA 37. That experience of happiness which at first seems like hell[37] and in the end seems like heaven,[38] consisting in a condition of clear and serene insight into and apprehension of the real self, is proclaimed *sattvic*.

SLOKA 38. That experience of happiness which consists in being attracted by sensuous pleasures, which at first seem heavenly but finally is hellish, is regarded as *rajasic*.

SLOKA 39. That experience of happiness which emerges from sleepiness, laziness and headlessness, which both in the beginning and in the end deludes the self, is asserted to be *tamasic*.

G. OMNIPREVALENCE OF THE GUNAS

SLOKA 40. Nowhere, neither on earth nor among the gods of heaven, is anything freed from these three *gunas* which are inherent in nature.

SLOKA 41. Arjuna,[39] differences in the efforts of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras[40] may be accounted

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[36]Lit., O Best of the Bharatas.

[37]Lit., poison, which brings terrible fear and death.

[38]Lit., like nectar or ambrosia, experienced as having an immortal quality about it.

[39]Lit., O Harasser of Foes.

[40]The four castes or *varnas* have no exact equivalents in Western cultures. The Brahmins supposedly combine scholarly and priestly functions in their makeup. They were learned in the ancient lore and were primarily responsible for memorizing and passing on the *Vedas, Upanishads* and *Brahmanas*. Originally they were responsible for conducting the *Vedic* ritualistic ceremonies. Even today they are generally regarded as having the highest rating so far as reverence is concerned. The Kshatriyas were members

for by tendencies[41] present in their own beings.

SLOKA 42. Brahmins are born into a class which has a tendency to seek calmness. self-control, restraint, cleanliness, endurance, honesty, understanding, alertness and confidence in the ultimate triumph of goodness.

SLOKA 43. Kshatriyas are born into a class which naturally seeks to attain bravery, glory, courage, adroitness, freedom from cowardice when fighting, generosity and a lordly disposition.

SLOKA 44. Vaishyas are born into a class which naturally devotes itself to farming, shepherding and trading. And Sudras are born in a class of those who are naturally inclined to seek to serve others.

SLOKA 45. Each man achieves his own ultimate success by putting forth his best effort in his own way. Let me tell you how such success is won through seeking to do one's own work.

SLOKA 46. A man wins success, worshipping that from which all things have emerged or by which all things are pervaded, by following his own occupation.[42]

SLOKA 47. It is better to follow one's own nature[43] imperfectly than another's nature perfectly. No one becomes degraded by trying to do the kind of work which comes to him naturally.

SLOKA 48. No one should stop doing the work allotted to him in life, even though dreary, for every enterprise is surrounded with weariness, just as fire is enshrouded in smoke.

SLOKA 49. By being alertly unattached to everything, by having self-mastery. by having extinguished aspiration and

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of the fighting and ruling class. They were nobles who managed the political affairs for the whole community. The Vaishayas were farmers and tradesmen, and, later, included bankers and craftsmen. The Sudras were landless workers who served others. See also IV:13 and IX:32-33.

[41] Lit., *gunas*.

[42] Lit., *karma*.

[43] Lit., *dharma*.

by renunciation, one becomes completely successful in relinquishing interest in future rewards.

H. THE WAY TO SUCCESS

1. *Continue to Live with Confidence*

SLOKA 50. Now, Arjuna,[44] enlighten yourself by my summary of how to promote success, how to reach the ultimate,[45] which is the final goal of knowledge.

SLOKA 51. Having become permanently endowed with clarified insight and self-affirmation, having abandoned interest in sensuous pleasures, such as melodious sounds, and having discarded both elation and depression,

SLOKA 52. Living in solitude, eating little, restricting his words and deeds and thoughts, continually aware of[46] the way to the goal of life,[47] experiencing freedom from passion,

SLOKA 53. Having given up interest in self-assertion, power, pride, lust, enmity and property, having become selfless and peaceful, such a person is suited for enjoying ultimacy.[48]

SLOKA 54. Enjoying ultimacy, a completely serene self neither hopes nor regrets. Being undisturbed by anything, he (thereby) achieves perfect devotion to me.

SLOKA 55. By being devoted to me, he realizes who or what I really am. Then, truly understanding me, he automatically merges with me.

SLOKA 56. He continues to put forth all his (normal) efforts, trusting in me. By my grace he constantly enjoys the continuing goal.[49]

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[44]Lit., O Son of Kunti.

[45]Lit., *Brahman.*

[46]Lit., *dhyana.*

[47]Lit., *yoga.*

[48]Lit., *Brahman*-being.

[49]I.e., the way-goal, or goal that is the way and way that is the goal.

2. *Advice to Arjuna*

SLOKA 57. (Therefore), pay attention to all tasks (while) fully accepting[50] me and regarding me as the ultimate. Endowed with insight into the way to the goal of life, constantly be aware of me.

SLOKA 58. By being aware of me, you will rise above all difficulties by my grace. But if, egotistically, you refuse to listen, you will perish.

SLOKA 59. If, impelled by egoism, you insist, "I will not fight", then your resolution is mistaken, (for your own) nature[51] will compel you.

SLOKA 60. Compelled by your own instincts, Arjuna,[52] forced by your own desires for future rewards, you will be induced to do even that which, because you lack wisdom, you wish to evade doing.

SLOKA 61. God resides in the heart of all beings, Arjuna, propelling all things deterministically through the power of *maya*.[53]

SLOKA 62. Seek assurance in him alone, Arjuna,[54] and wholeheartedly.[55] By his grace you will attain ultimate peace and continuing stability.

SLOKA 63. In this way, I have revealed to you the profoundest of profound knowledge. Consider it fully. Then do as you wish.

3. *Final Remarks*

SLOKA 64. Listen again to my final word, the most profound

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[50]Lit., *sannyasa*, renouncing; here meaning surrendering to or assenting to or accepting.

[51]Lit., *prakriti*.

[52]Lit., O Son of Kunti.

[53]Cosmic force which generates and contains created beings and at the same time causes delusion or misunderstanding to be inherent in all creatures as a consequence of their fall from perfection. Often translated superficially as "illusion".

[54]Lit., O Descendant of Bharata.

[55]Lit., with your whole being, nature or tendency.

of all. You are my beloved, enduring in this way. For this reason I will tell you what is good for you.

SLOKA 65. Keep me in your mind. Devote yourself to me. Yearn for me. Respect me.[56] You will really touch me. I pledge my trust, (for) you are dear to me.

SLOKA 66. Discarding all (other) paths,[57] seek assurance in me alone. I will free you from all shortcomings. Do not worry.

SLOKA 67. This (advice) is for you, but neither for those who lack restraint, nor for those who remain undevoted, nor for those unwilling to listen to advice, nor for those who condemn me.

SLOKA 68. Whoever will expound this ultimate profundity to my devotees, (thereby) expressing highest devotion to me, will really come to me without any doubt.

SLOKA 69. And, among all mankind, no one loves me more than he. And in all earth, there will never be one dearer to me than he.

SLOKA 70. And whoever will study this philosophy[58] discussed by us, by him shall I be appreciated through mutual[59] understanding. This is my opinion.

SLOKA 71. Whatever man will listen with confidence and without complaint, he too shall be freed. He will reach the land of his dreams as a reward for his efforts.

SLOKA 72. (Now tell me), Arjuna,[60] whether you have have listened to me with concentrated attention, and whether your ignorance and delusion have been destroyed, Arjuna.[61]

SLOKA 73. Arjuna replied: My delusion has been destroyed. By your graciousness to me, O Krishna,[62] I have regained

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[56]Lit., salute or worship.

[57]Lit., *dharma*. See Appendix II (4).

[58]Lit., *dharma*. See Appendix II (6).

[59]I.e., reciprocal.

[60]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[61]Lit., O Winner of Wealth.

[62]Lit., O Chanbeless One.

proper perspective. I am confident. My doubts have gone. I will carry out your teaching.

SLOKA 74. Sanjaya[63] said: This is the way I heard such an amazing and exciting discourse between two great minds, Krishna[64] and Arjuna.[65]

SLOKA 75. By the grace of Vyasa[66] I have heard this ultimate profundity, namely, the way to the goal of life, directly from Krishna, the God who is the way to the goal of life, with himself doing the speaking.

SLOKA 76. I recall again and again, O King,[67] this amazing and wholesome dialogue between Krishna[68] and Arjuna. And I enjoy it again and again.

SLOKA 77. And recalling it again and again, with the marvellous appearance of Krishna,[69] I am greatly amazed, O King. And I enjoy it again and again.

SLOKA 78. Wherever is Krishna, the wise person who knows the art of living wholesomely, and wherever is Arjuna the fighter,[70] there is good fortune, triumph, prosperity, assurance and guidance. That is my opinion.

Om. Tat. Sat.

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[63]Reporter of the battle scene to the blind King Dritharasthra. See Appendix I. See also XI:9 and 50.

[64]Lit., The Omnipresent.

[65]Lit., the Son of Pritha.

[66]Reputed author of the *Mahabharata*, including the *Gita*, who here apparently congratulates himself.

[67]Dritharasthra.

[68]Lit., The Luxuriant One.

[69]Lit., *Hari*, the multifunctioning God.

[70]Lit., archer; allegorically, he who fights the battles of life.

APPENDIX I

THE HISTORICAL-DRAMATIC SETTING

THE *Bhagavad Gita* is embedded in the latter part of the *Mahabharata*, the greatest Hindu epic. Thus it has its literary setting as a part of that work. Yet the bulk of the *Gita* itself is devoted to the philosophy of Krishna. Only the introductory chapter, the first ten *slokas* of Ch. II, the last five *slokas* of the final Ch. XVIII and *Sloka* 9 and 50 of Ch. XI give any clue to the historical and literary setting. Sanjaya is the narrator of the whole episode, yet his name appears only eight times in the seven hundred slokas. These references to him provide the barest skeleton for the plot. Dhritarashtra, the blind king to whom the story is being told, plays no role within the *Gita* except to hear the story.

The geographical location of the battle is at Kurukshetra, a plain north of Delhi, where a new university, Kurukshetra University, has just been opened by the Government of Punjab. The battle takes place between the five sons of Pandu whose inherited land has been wrongfully taken from them and who, after serving time in exile to fulfill the terms of a contract, were still denied access to it. They were then willing to settle for five small villages rather than engage in war. But when even these were withheld, the magnitude of the injustice became obvious to the many who rallied to their defense. Doubtless the battle actually took place and the sons of Pandu regained their land. The date of the battle remains in doubt, so we must await further historical study of the B.C. period to decide between conflicting opinions.

The author agrees with T. M. P. Mahadevan that "We

should not make too much of the historical setting."[1] "As the dialogue proceeds the dramatic element disappears. The echoes of the battlefield die away, and we have only an interview between God and man."[2] This interview, which takes place supposedly at the crucial moment before the two armies dash at each other in battle, is important because of the philosophy expressed. Vyasa has indeed chosen a dramatic scene which prepares his audience with great anticipation. Except for illustrating the general conclusion in the specific example, "A warrior should fight dispassionately", the setting has no consequence so far as the philosophy expounded is concerned. Hence we have relegated it to an appendix. Yet since the *Gita*, as written, would be incomplete without it, it is included here.

CHAPTER I

SLOKA 1. Dhritarashtra asked: How did my people and the Pandavas[3] conduct themselves in the sphere of morality[4]

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[1]"The Twofold Path in the Gita", *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. XVI, No. 4, Jan., 1941, p. 317.

[2]S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 521, George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., London, 1927, 1948.

[3]I.e., the sons of Pandu. His five sons were Yudhisthira, Arjuna, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva.

[4]*Dharmakshetra. Dharma* means morality, not so much in the sense of mores but as principle, not merely as human custom but as cosmic order, not precepts but tendencies toward universal justice working themselves out in concrete form. Thus *dharma* refers to something ultimate in the nature of the universe and man. (See Appendix II.) Dhritarashtra inquired about how valiant and how virtuous, how well and how just, how worthily and how rightly the war was conducted. Thus, in effect, he posed a question which presupposed philosophical understanding. *Kshetra*, meaning field, area, region, sphere, may be interpreted as the sphere of mortality in the above sense.

when they met each other on the field of battle[5] seeking to fight, O Sanjaya?

SLOKA 2. Sanjaya replied: After viewing the panorama of Pandava fighters, the King Duryodhana came to his teacher[6] and said:

SLOKA 3. Behold this great army of the Pandavas organized by the son of Drupada,[7] your brilliant pupil, O teacher.

SLOKA 4. Here are the heros, with mighty bows and arrows: all like Bhima and Arjuna; Yuyudhana;[8] and Virata;[9] and Drupada,[10] the great charioteer;[11]

SLOKA 5. Dhrishtaketu;[12] and Chekitana; and the Valiant King of Kashi;[13] Purujit and Kuntibhoja[14] and

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[5]*Kurukshetra*, or field of the Kurus. While naming an actual geographical location, the allegorical intent of the *Gita* permits it to be interpreted also as the field of life generally. We have chosen to interpret it as "the sphere of actual affairs" in I:1, preceding Ch. II.

[6]Drona, son of Bhardvaja, and teacher of the art of war to both the Kurus and the Pandavas.

[7]Dhristadyumna, who avenged his father's defeat by slaying Drona, later in the *Mahabharata* story.

[8]Krishna's charioteer.

[9]King of the Matsyas.

[10]King of Panchala.

[11]That the *Gita* has allegorical intent is clear. But how much and what allegorical interpretation should be read into the *Gita* is a matter of great disagreement. We cite, relative to this and following *slokas*, B. R. Charan's interpretations as an example of how many of the characters in the *Gita* may be thought of as having allegorical names: Bhima, strength; Arjuna, mind; Yuyudhana, success; Virata, protection; Drupada, greatness. See Babu Radha Charan, *Bhagawat Gita*. . . ., pp. 1 ff., Dr. Lalit Mohan Basu M. B. Panini Office, Allahabad, 1928.

[12]King of Cedis, brother-in-law of Nakula.

[13]I.e., of Banaras.

[14]Two brothers. Kuntibhoja adopted Kunti who married Pandu and was Arjuna's mother.

Shaibya,[15] a bull among men;[16]

SLOKA 6. And Yudhamanyu the strong; and Uttamauja, the valiant; the son of Subhadra (Abhimanyu);[17] and the five sons of Draupadi[18] all truly great charioteers.[19]

SLOKA 7. O Best of the Twice-born,[20] let me review the names of the best among the leaders of my fighters. I recall them to your attention.

SLOKA 8. (They include) you, good Sir, and Bhishma;[21] and Karna[22] and Kripa,[23] the victor in war; Ashvatthama[24] and Vikarna;[25] and also Jayadratha,[26] son of Somadatta;[27, 28]

SLOKA 9. And in addition several other brave heroes, skilled

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[15]King of the Shibi tribe.

[16]Charan's allegorical interpretation: Dhirshtaketu, prosperity; Chekitana, calmness; Kashiraja, purity; Purujit and Kuntibhoja, victory; Shaibya, valour.

[17]Wife of Arjuna.

[18]Draupadi, daughter of Draupada, married the five Pandava princes and had one son by each.

[19]Charan's allegorical interpretation: Yudhamanyu, courage; Uttamauja, glory; Subhadra, honor; Draupadeyas, faith.

[20]Drona, who, though a military instructor, was born a Brahmin. See Ch. XVII, footnote 11.

[21]Regent of Hastinapura who raised Dhritarashtra and Pandu; in the present battle he was mortally wounded by arrows, but discoursed on moral advice for fifty-eight days before he died.

[22]Half-borther of Arjuna.

[23]Brother-in-law of Drona.

[24]Son of Drona, who avenged his father's death by killing Dhristadyumna.

[25]The third of the hundred sons of Dhritarashtra.

[26]Son-in-law of Dhritarashtra.

[27]King of the Bahikas.

[28]Charan's allegorical interpretation: Drona, greed; Bhishma, terror (anger); Karna, attachment; Kripa, compassion; Ashwatthama, death; Vikarna, cruelty; Bhorishrava (son of Somadatta), enjoyment; Jayadratha, falsehood.

in fighting and well-equipped, prepared to sacrifice their lives for my sake.

SLOKA 10. Our forces, guided by Bhishma, seem weak, whereas their forces, lead by Bhima, appear strong.[29]

SLOKA 11. And the troops are standing in rows according to ranks. Let leaders surround and support Bhishma above all.

SLOKA 12. In order to encourage the Old Kuru,[30] a grandfather, he[31] blew his mighty trumpet[32] and let out a lion's roar.

SLOKA 13. Then, trumpets, drums[33] cymbals and horns[34] suddenly blared out, and the noise was tremendous.

SLOKA 14. Then Krishna[35] and Arjuna,[36] seated in their great chariot drawn by white horses, also blew their powerful trumpets.[37]

SLOKA 15. Krishna[38] blew the Panchjanya, Arjuna[39] blew the Devadatta, and Bhima,[40] the wolf-bellied accomplisher of terrible deeds, blew the great trumpet, Paundra.[41]

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[29]Some translators, considering this battle in the larger setting of the *Mahabharata*, reverse this interpretation, saying: "Our forces are boundless or unlimited, whereas theirs are limited." See B. G. Tilak, *Srimad Bhagavadgita Rahasya*, Vol. I, pp. 854-56, Tilak Brothers, Poona, 1935.

[30]Duryodhana.

[31]Bhishma.

[32]Lit., conch.

[33]Both large and small kettledrums.

[34]Lit., cow horns.

[35]Lit., *Madhava*, husband of the Goddess of wealth (Laxmi).

[36]Lit., The Son of Pandu.

[37]Charan's allegorical interpretation: Madhava, intellect; Pandava, mind.

[38]Lit., The Master of the Senses.

[39]Lit., The Winner of Wealth.

[40]Vrikodara.

[41]Charan's allegorical interpretation: Panchajanya, meditation; Hrishikesha, intellect; Devadatta, devotion; Dhananjaya, mind; Paundra, austerity; Vrikodara, strength. Charan interprets the

SLOKA 16. King Yudhishthira, the son of Kunti, (blew) the Anantavijaya, while Nakula and Sadhadeva (blew) the Sughosha and the Manipushpaka.[42]

SLOKA 17. The King of Kashi[43], the great bowman, Shikhandi the great charioteer, Dhrishtadyumna and Virata and . Satyaki, the unconquered,[44]

SLOKA 18. O Lord of Earth,[45] Drupada, the sons of Draupadi, and the mighty-armed son of Subhadra,[46] all blew their various trumpets.[47]

SLOKA 19. That noisy commotion, reverberating through the sky and earth, terrified the spirits of Dhritarashtra's supporters.[48]

SLOKA 20. Then, seeing the supporters of Dhritarashtra[49] poised in readiness and the shooting about to begin, Arjuna,[50] under the banner of Hanuman,[51] raised his bow.

SLOKA 21. Then, O Lord of Earth,[52] (Arjuna) spoke to

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sloka, saying, "the Intellect and Mind perform acts of meditation. Devotion and Strength engage in austerity." *Op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

[42]Charan's allegorical interpretation: Anantavijaya, *dharma;* Yudhishthira, truth; Nakula, patience; Sahadeva, control; Sughosha, sacrifice; Manipushpaka, gift. "I.e., the truth engages in Dharma while Patience and Control engage in performing sacrifices and making gifts respectively." *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[43]Ruler of Varanasi or Banaras.

[44]Charan's interpretation: Kashya, purity; Shikhandi, humility; Dhrishtadyumna, contentment; Virata, protection; Satyaki, success.

[45]Dhritarashtra, to whom Sanjaya is relating this account.

[46]Abhimanyu.

[47]Charan's allegories: Drupada, greatness; Draupadeyas, faith; Subhadra, honour; Trumpets, feats.

[48]Lit., the Kauravas, or sons of the Kurus.

[49]Lit., the Kauravas.

[50]Lit., the Son of Pandu.

[51]Revered monkey who helped rescue Sita, wife of Rama, hero of the *Ramayana*, second longest Hindu epic.

[52]Dhritarashtra.

Krishna[53] as follows. Arjuna cried out: Krishna,[54] put my chariot out between the two armies.

SLOKA 22. Let me see these who are aroused and ready to fight, and with whom I must fight in this coming battle.

SLOKA 23. I would see those who are gathered here waiting to fight, aiming to please the evil-minded son of Dhritarashtra in battle.

SLOKA 24. Sanjaya said: O Bharata,[55] Krishna[56] moved their splendid chariot out between the two armies as Arjuna[57] had commanded.

SLOKA 25. In front of Bhishma and Drona and all the rulers of the land, (Krishna) said: Arjuna,[58] "Look at these Kurus gathered together."

SLOKA 26. Then Arjuna saw fathers and grandfathers, teachers, uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons and also friends standing there.

SLOKA 27. (He also observed) relatives[59] and also companions in both armies. Then Arjuna[60] looked at all these kinsmen assembled there.

SLOKA 28. Arjuna, greatly distressed, with great pity, spoke: O Krishna,[61] I see these, my kinsmen, poised, eager to fight.

SLOKA 29. My limbs fail me. My mouth is parched. My body trembles. And my hair stands on end.

SLOKA 30. My bow[62] falls from my hand. My skin burns. And I cannot stand. My mind is dizzy.

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[53]Lit., The Master of the Senses.

[54]Lit., O Changeless One. Krishna is at hand, serving as Arjuna's charioteer in this battle.

[55]I.e., Dhritarashtra, also a descendant of King Bharata.

[56]Lit., The Master of the Senses.

[57]Lit., Destroyer of Foes.

[58]Lit., O Son of Pritha.

[59]Lit., fathers-in-law.

[60]Lit., The Son of Kunti.

[61]"Krishna" means "the dark one", or "he who attracts".

[62]Lit., Gandiva.

SLOKA 31. Krishna,[63] I envision evil omens and can see no good in killing our own people in battle.

SLOKA 32. O Krishna, I want neither victory, nor kingdom, nor pleasures. O Krishna,[64] what good is a kingdom, or pleasures, or life?

SLOKA 33. Those for whose sake we seek a kingdom and enjoyment and pleasure, they are poised here in battle, risking their wealth and their lives.

SLOKA 34. There are teachers and fathers and sons, and also grandfathers and grandsons, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law and brothers-in-law, as well as other relations.

SLOKA 35. I do not want to kill them O Krishna,[65] even though they kill me, not even for the sake of the whole universe,[66] so why for the sake of these lands?

SLOKA 36. O Krishna,[67] what happiness can come to us from killing these sons of Dhritarashtra? Slaying these wretches will bring us only misery.

SLOKA 37. Therefore we ought not to kill Dhritarashtra's sons, our kinsmen. For how can we achieve happiness from killing our own people, O Krishna?[68]

SLOKA 38. Even though they see no wrong in disrupting families and no misery in making enemies out of friends, because their greed has overcome their prudence,

SLOKA 39. Why should we, who clearly recognize that it is wrong to disrupt families, not have learned to avoid such misery?

SLOKA 40. When families disintegrate, traditional family morality perishes. When morality perishes, then disorder overwhelms whole families.

SLOKA 41. When disorder prevails, O Krishna, wives become

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[63]Lit., O Luxuriant One.

[64]Lit., *Govinda*, Restorer of the Earth.

[65]Lit., O Slayer of Madhu.

[66]Lit., the three worlds, i.e., heaven, earth and underworld.

[67]Lit., O Destroyer of the World.

[68]Lit., O Husband of the Goddess of Wealth.

unfaithful. When wives become unfaithful, the social order disintegrates,[69] O Krishna.[70]

SLOKA 42. Disintegration of the social order results in terror for families of both those who are killers and those who are killed. For their ancestors become dejected when deprived of gifts of food, rice and milk.[71]

SLOKA 43. By such vicious acts, destroying families and disintegrating the social order, social morality and family morality perish forever.

SLOKA 44. We have been told, O Krishna,[72] that men whose family morality has been extinguished must live in perpetual torment.

SLOKA 45. Also, we are engaged in committing a great wrong when we resolve to kill our kinsmen because of our great greed for a land of our own.[73]

SLOKA 46. It would be better for me if the sons of Dhritarashtra, shooting their weapons, were to kill me in battle, without my resistance and without any armour.

SLOKA 47. Sanjaya said: Having expressed himself in this way on the battle-field, Arjuna sat back in the chariot, throwing down his bow and arrows, his mind troubled with worry.

CHAPTER II

SLOKA 1. Sanjaya said: To (Arjuna) who was so overwhelmed by pity, with tears in his aching eyes, Krishna[74] spoke (as follows).

SLOKA 2. Krishna[75] exclaimed: Why has such helplessness

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[69]Lit., caste-confusion occurs.

[70]Lit., O Descendant of Vrishni.

[71]Lit., Pinda, a rice-ball, and water, or sustaining liquid poured as a libation.

[72]Lit., O Destroyer of the World.

[73]Lit., pleasures of a kingdom.

[74]Lit., Slayer of Madhu.

[75]Lit., The Worthy Lord.

overtaken you in this crisis? It is unworthy, ignoble, disgraceful, Arjuna!

SLOKA 3. Do not let weakness overpower you, Arjuna![76] This is not like you. Throw off this contemptible cowardice! Get up, Arjuna![77]

SLOKA 4. Arjuna responded: O Krishna,[78] how can I fight, shooting my arrows at Bhishma and Drona, who are worthy to be revered, O Destroyer of Enemies?[79]

SLOKA 5. It is really better to become a beggar in this world than to kill such great and noble leaders. If I kill these great leaders here to obtain desired objects, how can I enjoy the bloodstained loot?

SLOKA 6. We cannot foretell which will happen, whether we will conquer or be conquered. Standing before us are the sons of Dhritarashtra; even after killing them,[80] we will not want to live.

SLOKA 7. My being is overwhelmed with compassion. My mind is unclear as to what I ought to do. I beg you to tell me definitely what is best for me. I am your pupil. I trust you. Teach me.

SLOKA 8. I cannot see how I can be relieved of this anxiety which cripples my body, even if I would gain unexcelled riches and power over the earth or even lordship over the gods.

SLOKA 9. Sanjaya said: When he had finished speaking to Krishna,[81] Arjuna[82] addressed Krishna[83] saying: "I refuse to fight." Then he became silent.

SLOKA 10. Then, O Bharata,[84] Krishna,[85] half smiling, lectured to him[86] who was faltering in the midst of the two armies, as follows.[87]

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[76]Lit., O Son of Pritha. [77]Lit., Harasser of Foes.
[78]Lit., Slayer of Madhu.
[79]I.e., Krishna. [80]Our enemies.
[81]Lit., Master of the Senses. [82]Lit., The Destroyer of Foes.
[83]Lit., The Restorer of the Earth. [84]I.e., Dhritarashtra.
[85]Lit., The Master of the Senses. [86]I.e., Arjuna.
[87]Continued in Ch. II. See Ch. I first.

APPENDIX II

THE NATURE OF DHARMA

THE TERM *dharma* has no precise equivalent in English. Yet it is a key term in Hindu thinking, popular and technical. It is rich in connotations. It occurs often in the *Bhagavad Gita*, but since many different meanings are intended by it in different contexts, various translations are needed. Here (Ch. II, footnote 11) we translate *dharma* as "one's own nature". But this translation should be understood in terms of a larger background. In order to try to convey some idea of this background for beginners, I will venture to provide my own summary sketch of some of the levels of its meanings.

1. Ultimately, *dharma* is derived from, and is thus implicit in, the ultimate nature of the universe itself. Since typical Hindu views tend to regard ultimate reality as a kind of quiescent pure being, which is above and beyond all law and order, it is difficult for those not acquainted with the view to see how this is possible. Yet, since ultimate reality in its quiescent state is normally regarded as the standard and goal for all else, *dharma* remains permanently implicit in it. It is not customary, however, to refer to ultimate reality as *dharma*.

2. *Dharma* is the order of nature which emerges into being during creation. Here "nature" is conceived as being not so much "physical" as "spiritual" in nature, for the spiritual is usually regarded as more ultimate than the physical. Yet what evolves as "physical" must also manifest itself in an orderly way, and so the laws of nature as well as the laws of spirit may be referred to as *dharma*.

3. Nature is regarded as inherently moral. That is, anything may be regarded as good or bad in proportion to how near it is to, or how far it is from, its ultimate goal. So the term

dharma commonly refers to the moral order of nature which requires that justice be done in accordance with the Law of Karma even if many lives are required. It also connotes the idea that final transcendence above all that is good and evil is better than being all-good-versus-evil.

4. *Dharma* refers to the nature of each individual, whether animal, human being, or deity, as determined both by its relation to an ultimate goal which transcends order and to the particular lot in life in which a person finds himself. So whether one be rich or poor, old or young, a soldier or a sweeper, a master or a servant, he has a nature befitting his circumstances. Fulfilling one's nature as a mother, as a merchant or as a king is part of one's *dharma*. So *dharma* may be translated as duty to one's self conceived both in one's social and in one's cosmic setting. Since the individual is social, his own *dharma* entails fulfilling his social duties, whatever they may be.

5. Because of the role which mores, customs and political laws play in regulating the lives of individuals and in reflecting the moral order of the universe, *dharma* is extended to canon law, to established traditions, to the advice of sages and the edicts of kings. What is and what is not properly considered *dharma* may be subject of much controversy, here as in the other senses being outlined.

6. Since Indians respect the advice of their ancient scriptures and great teachers, they tend to regard the teachings of these as true, i.e., as revealing the nature of things, or *dharma*. Thus *dharma* is the truth taught by the scriptures, such as the *Vedas* (See Ch. IX, footnote 25), or by famous teachers, such as the Buddha or of Krishna himself. (See Ch. XVIII, *Sloka* 70.)

7. Since it is hard to distinguish between the teachings (words through which the doctrine is taught) and what the teachings are about, the term *dharma* is extended to the teachings themselves, i.e., to the very words by which the truth is taught. Thus *dharma* comes to mean "doctrine" (true doctrine, of course), as in the case of Buddha's *Dharma* or, since its Pali form is better known, *Dhamma*. Hence the scriptures themselves are *dharma*. (One school of thought, Purva Mimamsa, claims

the *Vedas* to be so authoritative that the gods derive their being from the *Vedas* rather than vice versa.)

8. Since a person may or may not develop tendencies or habits of following moral principles, those who embody these tendencies in themselves thereby actualize *dharma* more fully in ways which others do not. Hence, sometimes *dharma* connotes "virtue" in the sense of having the strength to achieve one's ends.

9. Unattained virtues remain ideals, so *dharma* may connote ideals of the ultimate goods yet unattained. (See Ch. XVIII *Sloka* 34.)

10. Finally, since each different kind of thing has its own nature, or *dharma*, we may find very specialized usages of the term, such as the nature of space or the principle making rest possible, as in the Jaina system.

Thus the Sanskrit term *dharma* has as vast a range of connotations as the English word "nature", without ever being a precise equivalent, due to different metaphysical presuppositions.

APPENDIX III | THE NATURE OF KARMA

THE NOTION of *karma* is so all-pervasive in Hindu thinking that it constitutes a part of common sense in India. Every Hindu child learns its meaning, and wide range of applications, as part of his elementary vocabulary. Hence its meaning is familiar and intuitively clear without needing formal definition or analytical examination. It is presupposed by every traditional Hindu sytem of philosophy, orthodox and unorthodox alike. But Western readers will need some introduction to its rich complex of connotations.

Without attempting to be exhaustive, I choose to distinguish twenty-seven elements in its makeup.

1. *Karma* is commonly translated simply as "action" or "activity". So interpreted, it is opposed to inactivity, passivity, or quiescence.

2. The activity is *experienced*. One is aware of it or conscious of it. What is never experienced does not enter into the notion of *karma*. The experienced activity may also have unexperienced aspects or consequences, but these are irrelevant to the notion.

3. The activity is experienced in such a way as to involve *effort*, endeavour, exertion and, as effort is magnified or meets resistance, it comes to be experienced as striving. As such, it is opposed to lethargy, laziness, somnolence and indifference.

4. The effort is experienced as *intentional*. Intention involves volition or will. Hence *karmic* activity is voluntary or willed activity. Completely involuntary or unintentional activity is not regarded as *karmic*.

5. Intended effort or volitional activity presupposes *desire*, at least in its minimal form. Desire implies having a forward

look about it, in the sense that one does not yet have what is desired. Complete absence of desire would eliminate *karma.*

6. The effort is experienced as expecting to produce *results.* Hence the idea of cause and effect is involved. Consequences are expected. The activity is not intended as mere motion,to and fro, or present gyration or random exercise. It is purposive or directed in the sense that results or consequences of the activity are expected. This effort may be called "work". Activity which is without effort is not *karmic.*

7. The results to be produced are intended. That is, in addition to intending to act and to expecting to produce results, *karmic* action involves *intended results.* Hence, the intention involved has two aspects: intention to act or to put forth effort and the intention to produce results of such action. Both the activity and the results are intended. One need not be clear about what the results will be. But the notion of *karma* implies that the results in question are influenced by intention.

8. The results are expected and intended to be either *good or bad.* Thus they are values or have values as essential to them. They are called "fruits" (*phala*). Now results may also be neither good nor bad but these are not involved in the concept of *karma,* at least not directly. It is true that, in addition to the notion of *karma,* Hindu thought typically idealizes a goal of life which is beyond all good and evil, rather than all good, and which somehow, paradoxically, is better than that which is all good. Furthermore, when this additional ideal is involved, intentions and efforts leading toward it are themselves regarded as good. When this is so, they then have *karmic* effects. But the notion of *karma* by itself is concerned with results which are either good or bad, not with results which are neither good nor bad nor which are beyond both good and bad.

9. Since the good or bad results are products of intentions, the intentions themselves may be judged to be good or bad. Thus *karma* involves not only the idea of good or bad results, but also the idea of *good or bad intentions.*

10. Since good and bad may be more good or more bad, both intentions and results may be either *better or worse* (or even best and worst). Hence, the notion of *karma* entails the

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idea of a hierarchy in the limited sense of some intentions and results being better or having higher value while others are worse or have a lower value. But precisely what constitutes better or worse, or best or worst, or what kind of hierarchy may exist, is not a part of the notion of *karma* by itself.

11. Although one might intend and act and produce good results without thinking of results as a reward, the notion of *karma* entails the idea of *reward*. When one intends and works to produce good results and finds good results coming to him as a consequence, he learns to regard these results as rewards. When one intends and works to produce evil results and finds evil results coming to him as a consequence, he may also learn to regard these as rewards, especially when associating with others, since others are more likely to call attention to our faults than to our virtues.

12. To the extent that effort is exerted in producing good or better results, one tends to believe that his reward is *deserved*. To the extent that others see one suffer from intentions and efforts which produce bad or worse results, they try to convince him that his reward is deserved. The notion of *karma* includes the idea of rewards as deserved.

13. The idea of deserving involves the notion of *justice*. If you do good, then you should receive good. If you do evil, then you should receive evil. If you do nothing, then you should receive nothing. If you do more, then you should receive more. If you do less, then you should receive less. Justice involves the idea of *equality* of gift and receipt. Now, since it is obvious that gifts and receipts cannot always be exactly equal in kind, all that is required is equality of value.

14. The idea of exact equality of value involves the idea of, or the principle of, *uniformity*. This is formulated as the Law of Karma. This law, in effect, states that there are no variations in the operation of the principle. One always get what he deserves.

15. The Law of Karma is not only uniform, having no variations; but it is also *universal*, having no exceptions. The Law applies not only to all human beings, whether children or adults, whether awake or dreaming, whether influenced or

not by others or by circumstances, whether sane or insane, but also to all intending beings, such as animals, deities and even plants, if they also intend.

16. Already involved in the notions of uniformity and universality is the notion of *inevitability*. No one can escape from the consequences of his own intentions and actions. What one sows he must also reap. Such escape as is provided in Hindu systems derives from additional ideas, which do not contradict the idea of *karma* but supplement it with ideas of how to gain merits quickly, for efforts to transcend the workings of the Law of Karma are believed to have especially meritorious effects.

17. Implicit in the notion of *karma* is *time*. Time is required to produce effects or for "fruits" to "ripen". *Karma* does not operate in a timeless condition. If there were no time, there could be no *karma*.

18. Since some effects are produced quickly and others require more time, distinction is needed between *proximate* and *remote* times. Some rewards are received immediately, some in a few days, some after months or years. But the idea of universal justice and the Law of Karma require that all intentions and efforts will receive their rewards, sooner or later.

19. Since it appears obvious that some persons who do much good die before they have reaped all of the goods they deserve, while others who have done much evil die before they have suffered all the evils which they deserve, there must be a *future life* in which full justice can be done. If one such future life is insufficient, then many, even an infinite number, of such lives may be needed in order that the principle of justice may work itself out completely for each person. Although belief in reincarnation would not be necessary to the idea of *karma* if perfect justice could be expected and observed within each single lifetime, it is necessary to the idea as it works itself out in observable practice.

20. Since one always gets what he deserves, he always deserves what he gets. One's condition in life, whether happy or miserable, rich or poor, healthy or ill, respected or despised, or having a high or low *station in life*, must be regarded as a

deserved result of previous intentions and actions. Although no particular caste system is implied by the notion of *karma*, whatever social, political or economic conditions happen to prevail, enter into the fixing of one's lot in a particular life. Indeed, whether one is reborn as a human being at all, or as a cow, monkey, chicken or worm, results from deserts merited by previous conduct.

21. Since time is required for fruition of some merits or demerits, the idea of *storability* of such merits and demerits is required. These have come to be called *karmas*, i.e., "good *karmas*" and "bad *karmas*". The idea of justice involves the idea that they do not deteriorate or grow in any way due to storage.

22. Since such *karmas* will produce their effects eventually, they must be conceived as latent powers, or *potencies*, or causal agencies. Once their effects have been actualized, however, they cease to exist.

23. Since one's store of good and bad *karmas* determines his lot in life, and since many different kinds of condition in life are observable (as deserved), we may classify these *karmic* potencies in accordance with the kinds of results they produce. Hence, *karmas* are *classifiable* into kinds. Except for classifying *karmas* into those which will ripen proximately or remotely, no particular classification of kinds of *karmas* seems inherent in the general notion of *karma*. But once the idea of classifiability of *karmas* comes to attention, interest in pursuing the problem of trying to classify *karmas* occurs naturally. Jainism has developed this interest farther than any other Hindu school.

24. Inherent in the notion of *karma* are certain other ideas. One of these is that an *individual self* exists. This self is different from other selves, for the intentions, efforts, actions, stored *karmas*, and rewards merited by the principle of justice, all pertain to a single self. Certain characteristics of such a self may be noted as implicit in the idea of *karma*, because they are those needed for the operation of *karma*. Such a self is conscious, intends, wills, exerts effort, acts, is a causal agency, produces effects, produces good and bad results, has good and bad intentions, deserves rewards, will receive all rewards deserved, will enjoy and suffer such rewards, is temporal, will

endure long enough for all merited rewards to be actualized, is subject to the Law of Karma, has conditions consequent upon deserved acts, may be reincarnated. Theravada Buddhists, who deny the existence of a soul, experience great difficulty in maintaining both the Law of Karma and the No-Soul doctrine.

25. Another of these inherent ideas is that of a *moral universe*. Although there may also be non-moral aspects or areas of the universe, at least part of the universe, both that part including men and that part transcending men but including animals, deities (if such there be), and all sentient (hence intending) beings, and whatever is needed to assure the operation of the uniform, universal and inevitable law of justice for all intending beings, is moral.

26. Consequently, some conception of how the universe can assure such moral justice, and some idea of the means by which such justice is guaranteed, are needed. Various views have been set forth. The most usual and most consistent is that conceiving the system as automatic. Like cause-effect equalities in non-moral systems of physics and metaphysics, the system is conceived as self-operating. Intentions and acts generate storable self-ripening *karmas* whose potencies produce their effects in due course. However, some introduce a god, who must then either remain transcendent, and thus neither influencing nor influenced by the system (and hence useless for explanatory purposes), or influencing and influenced by (and hence subject to the Law of Karma whenever he intends and acts, enjoying and suffering merited rewards), or influencing but not influenced by the system (which really violates the principle that justice is universal, and transforms the concept of *karma* as described above into a different kind of concept).[1] Other schemes of deity are possible. But what the notion of *karma* requires is not a theistic system (typical Jains, Buddhists and Samkhya-Yogins are atheistic), but only some belief about how *karmic* justice can be assured in the universe.

27. Some conception of the *goal of life*, either within or

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[1]See IV:9, 13 and 14, where God is described as intending good results, and IX:9, where God is described as not.

transcending *karmic* action, is needed. One may hold that some (as with Jains) or all selves perpetually rise and fall in merit and condition of existence without ever reaching an end. One may hold that some or all selves eventually attain a sufficient surplus to gain release from suffering in some heaven, either temporarily (e.g., in *Brahmaloka*) or eternally (but not consistently, for temporally induced merit hardly merits eternal reward). One may hold that some or all selves escape from the round of rebirths after somehow balancing deserved merits and demerits to an infinitesimal equation. The typical ideal of a *nirvanic* goal transcending time and *karma* is not essential to the notion of *karma* itself, but some notion of a goal of life consistent with the notion of *karma* is essential to it.[2]

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[2]Jadunath Sinha, Professor Emeritus of Meerut College, analyzes *karma* as voluntary action (as distinct from other meanings prevailing in Hindu philosophies), consisting of (1) knowledge of an end to be realized or an object to be attained, (2) desire to act, (3) will or volition, (4) physical effort, and (5) outward bodily action. The action produces intended or forseen and unintended and unforeseen consequences, good and evil, in the external world. (See his *Indian Psychology: Emotion and Will*, last chapter.)

APPENDIX IV

THE SAMKHYA SYSTEM

IN URGING Arjuna to fight, whether against enemies on the battlefield or the tendencies in life inimical to spiritual perfection, Vyasa's Krishna feels called upon to provide at least a sketch of the metaphysical and epistemological foundations for his moral exhortation. Although these foundations are also mentioned elsewhere in the *Gita*,[1] the problem is faced directly in Ch. XIII on "Matter and Spirit". The metaphysical scheme is known as *Samkhya* but unfortunately, for a simple introduction, the term *Samkhya* has had a long history of uses, applying in some cases to views which are partly contradictory. And many ideas in the *Samkhya* systems have been incorporated into systems bearing different names. The term occurs already in some of the Upanishads. It is used to name the prevailing philosophy throughout the *Mahabharata* of which the *Gita* is a part. It grew into one of the six orthodox schools of philosophy which attributes its systematization to Kapila. The *Samkhya* of the *Gita* is theistic; the *Samkhya* of Kapila is atheistic. The *Samkhya* of the *Gita* is monistic, regarding matter as a creation dependent upon spirit and the many spirits as creations of one Spirit; the *Samkhya* of Kapila is dualistic, regarding both matter and the many spirits as eternal and uncreated. Yet there are many elements, regarding the processes of evolution, the nature of knowledge and values and the ways to salvation, which are common to both systems and, indeed, to these and other Hindu philosophies.

Exposition here must be limited to the *Samkhya* of the *Gita*.

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[1]E.g., VIII:1-16.

Ultimate reality (Brahman) remains eternally undisturbed[2] by any change or motion in its pure and perfectly quiescent being, except for a bit of it[3] which manifests itself from time to time[4] as the vast multifarious cosmos of which we are minor parts and which we can experience in part. The manifestation may be viewed in two ways, one of which we call "objective", wherein the various stages of creation are viewed as objects thought of as external to us, and the other, "subjective", wherein the various stages of awareness of self and the world evolve.

Objectively, the first level of manifestation is God (or God-as-the-principle-of-manifestation as distinct from God as unmanifest: Brahman). God, in this sense, is both the principle of manifestation, which in its deeper nature remains such a principle without actually manifesting, and something which creates and permeates all of the created universe.[5] Thus it (*Ishwara*) appears as all of the various deities (e.g., Vishnu and Krishna),[6] as all of the natural phenomena (e.g., sun, rain, fire, wind),[7] and what is ultimate in each person (soul, *purusha*)[8] and each thing, animate or inanimate.[9] However, the created universe first appears as nature or matter (*prakriti*), for as God becomes manifest objectively he assumes the form of the physical universe, "the body of God", within which all further evolution occurs.[10]

Subjectively, the first level of manifestation is called *buddhi*, awareness. Since awareness of self and of objects is impossible without awareness itself, awareness itself must come into being before awareness of self and of objects can occur. *Buddhi*, as a first level of manifestation, is pure or bare in the sense that

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[2]See VIII:20.
[3]See X:41-42.
[4]See IV:7-8; VIII:17-21; X:34; XI:32.
[5]See IX:4; X:18-19.
[6]See X:21.
[7]See X:21-37; XI:39.
[8]See X:20.
[9]See VII:4-9; XI:5-7, 15-22.
[10]See IX:17.

it is not, in itself, aware of anything. However, as all of the other levels emerge into existence, it continues as the principle of awareness of all of these things, and whoever would attain the truest insight must seek to approach the kind of awareness which *buddhi* is in its purest state. (See Ch. II, footnote 17.)

A second level is called *ahamkara*, "I-am-ness", or a sense of self-awareness. *Buddhi*, awareness, generates *ahamkara*, self-awareness. This sense of self-awareness is needed by, and is presupposed in, all awareness of the self as agent. Hence, *ahamkara* continues to be present in, and a foundation for, all other levels of emergence. Again, self-awareness may be at first pure, unaware of objects, and then impure, or aware of, and interested in, objects. Since objects cannot be known without a knower, the knower of the objects is prior in being and emergence to the objects known. One who seeks true insight into the nature of himself should try to regain experience of pure self-awareness.

A third level, *manas*, mind, is the organ of awareness of objects, whether they be perceived through the senses, imagined or dreamed, and of willing and choosing regarding them. A fourth level consists of the five organs of preception, of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching, or eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin. A fifth level consists of the five organs of action, namely, the larynx, hands, feet, anus and organs of generation. However, the *Gita* groups all these together as "the ten organs and the one organ" without reference to them as different in level.

Since each of the kinds of objects perceived by each of the five organs of perception has its distinct nature, five *tanmantras*, the essences of colour, sound, odour, flavour and tactile quality, must emerge as manifestations. These are subtle in nature and must be thought of as principles or potencies which make perception of objects possible. But actual perception depends upon their manifestation in grosser forms as fire, ether (space), earth, water and air, one for each of the five *tanmantras* and hence for each of the organs of perception. The *Gita* does not elaborate upon these details, and again the extent to which they may be regarded as emerging as levels is questionable.

Although these numerous constituents emerge as further manifestations from and within *buddhi*, they cannot do so without the aid of nature or matter, *prakriti*, to provide a substantial path for the process. *Prakriti* itself is at first unevolved or unmanifest, and then it proceeds to contain and sustain the whole process through its own various levels of development. Just how *prakriti*, first unmanifest and then manifest, evolves out of *Ishwara* and how it is related to unmanifest and then manifest deity and *purusha*, soul, is not made clear in the *Gita*. The struggles with this problem yielded different solutions in the works of different schools of philosophy. The later *Samkhya* school separated *purusha* and *prakriti* into two eternally independent kinds of being; each of the many *purushas* independently observes the whole process of manifestation which occurs in *prakriti*, but no superior deity exists to unite or generate or consume the whole process. However, agreement on these details is not necessary to the message of the *Gita* which has to do primarily with happiness and salvation, and with metaphysics only secondarily and as a means of persuasion. In Ch. VII, *Sloka* 4, Krishna summarizes the constituents of his nature (*prakriti*) as eightfold: earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, *buddhi* and *ahamkara*.

Purusha, or spirit (soul), is contrasted with *prakriti*, matter, and is regarded as independent of it. Matter is pervaded with the *gunas* which serve as causes. Spirit is not causal, but is a kind of unmoving unmover which somehow gets caught into observing the material processes occurring at each of the levels of manifestation, and mistakenly accepts the material appearances of self-awareness and of objects as real—to its detriment. For it must experience struggle to free itself from these material entanglements before it can regain its pure state. *Samkhya* is essentially a self-help system. Each soul must free itself by its own efforts. Yet, the theistic version of it in the *Gita* seems to violate the self-help principle; for, on the one hand, Krishna testified that he is necessarily indifferent to the whole process,[11] and at the same time tries to pursuade Arjuna,

[11]See IX:9.

partly on the grounds that he is his personal friend who has graciously favoured him with intellectual help because he was very dear to Krishna.[12]

Epistemologically, the analysis of distinctions between "the field and the knower" is very sketchy. Its message is that, in spite of all of the numerous constituents in the field of knowledge, the ultimate reality is without parts and he who knows most truly knows that ultimate reality in unmanifest form. Ultimate reality is the true field of knowledge; and since both the knower (*purusha*, spirit) and the field known (*prakriti*, matter) are manifestations of the one and the same unmanifest being (Brahman), he who knows most truly knows that the knower and the known, spirit and matter, are really, in their most ultimate being, one and the same.

One who comprehends and accepts this scheme of things surely will be persuaded that the passage of events in everyday life are of not much concern, for they are temporary evanescences of an assured eternal being. One may then live in complete confidence that, no matter what happens, "all's right with the world".

However, the issue of whether or not to fight remains. The more one disturbs his mind, and therefore his soul, with conscience-stricken problems, the more deeply he remains immersed in mistaking the unrealities of the temporal world as real. His way of escape, through any of the *yogas* includes becoming undisturbed about the duties which life, such as those of a soldier who must lead his families into mutual slaughter, happen to bring to him. It is not the act of killing, but the mistaken belief that one[13] actually wants to kill or that one ought to be conscience-stricken about having killed, which is the real evil with which a soul must battle. Indifference to the world of difference, but not to the world of Indifference—this is the massage of the *Gita*. Its cosmology is designed to support this massage.

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[12]See XVIII:64-69; also X:11; XI:47; XVIII:58.

[13]I.e., his *purusha*.

APPENDIX V | THE THREE GUNAS

THE SANSKRIT term *guna* names something fundamental in Hindu thinking. Yet it has no strict English equivalent. It is often translated as "quality", partly because this term is also used to denote qualities and partly because it is itself highly ambiguous. The three *gunas* are qualities as distinguished from substance, and yet each has a substantial nature of its own in addition to the natures of the various substances of which they are qualities. There are precisely three such *gunas* because three and only three univeral tendencies are believed to exist. These tendencies are, briefly, the tendencies in the things to arise, continue and decline.

More fully, (1) *rajas guna* is the tendency in all things to stir, move, initiate action, arise, become aroused, grow, increase, proliferate, become aggressive, passionate and violent. (2) *Sattva guna* is the tendency in things to continue, and continuance is best when it is pure, i.e., freed from all things which cause it either to arise or decline. It is the tendency in things to remain at peace both within themselves and relative to all else. It is the tendency to remain placid, calm, serene and undisturbed by any internal or external tendency. Hence, *sattva guna* functions as a kind of resistance to and suppressor of both the tendencies to arise and decline. When the tendency in anything to remain in continued calm attains supremacy, then both the tendency to become aroused and the tendency to degenerate are held in abeyance, or in equilibrium. Thus although *sattva guna* may be thought of as purely pacific in nature, really it can function only through keeping the other two *gunas* in a tense state of equilibrium; thus, in this sense,

it is a very active *guna* or force. (3) *Tamas guna* is the tendency in things to degenerate, decline, decay and die.

Once one grasps the general nature of the three *gunas*, he can then discover their operation in each thing or process. He can find it in deity: Brahma creates, hence is dominated by *rajas guna;* Vishnu preserves, hence is dominated by *sattva guna;* Shiva destroys, hence is dominated by *tamas guna*. He can find it in men: *rajas guna* inclines men toward desiring, loving, wanting, yearning, longing, striving, and stimulates them to vigour, passion, effort, anxiety and craving. *Sattva guna* promotes goodness, purity, clarity, light, lucidity and brilliance; it conduces to steadiness, stability, patient endurance, tranquility, peace, satisfaction, happiness. *Tamas guna* is stupifying, resulting in dullness, carelessness, indolence, negligence, idleness, laziness, inattentiveness, slothfulness.

The *Gita* itself not only presupposes and asserts the all-importance of the *gunas*, but takes time to explain their nature through many illustrations. The general nature of the *gunas* as tendencies, forces, causes, potencies, etc., should be clear from the numerous examples already given (See Ch.II:Sloka 45; III:5, 27, 37, 38, 39; IV:13; VII:12, 13; XIII:14, 19, 20, 21, 31; XIV; XVII:1-22; XVIII:4-10, 19-44).

APPENDIX VI

ANALYTICAL OUTLINE OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA

CHAPTER I. LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION

A. *What happens When Troubles Arise?* 1 (Numbers refer to *slokas*)

B. *Historical-Literary Setting.* See Appendix I; I:1-46; II:1-10.

CHAPTER II. ITS FINAL ANSWER

A. *The Answer Summarized.* 11-53
  1. Be Not Anxious. 11

B. *Reasons for Not Worrying*
  1. Being Is Indestructible. 12-15
  2. Hence Killing Does Not Destroy. 16-25
  3. Even Changes Should Not Cause Anxiety. 26-30
  4. Your Own Nature Should Cause No Worry. 31-38

C. *The Way to the Goal*
  1. Why the Way Is Good. 39-41
  2. Foolish Ways. 42-46
  3. Rewards versus Serenity. 47-53

D. *How Do the wise Behave?* 54
  1. General Characteristics. 55-57
  2. How the Wise Speak. 58-60
  3. How the Wise Sit. 61-63
  4. How the Wise Walk. 64-67
  5. The Nature of Wisdom. 68-72

Chapter III. Life's Puzzle: Its Explanation

A. *Wisdom versus Rewards*
1. Why Work? Why Fight? 1-2
2. The Problem Analyzed. 3
3. Activity Is Natural and Necessary. 4-6
4. But Serenity Is Possible and Preferable. 7-8
5. The Principle of Reciprocity. 9
6. Its Origin and Nature. 10-16
7. Striving Is Ultimate. 17-24
8. Yet Anxiety Is Foolish. 25-26
9. Free Will Is Illusory. 27-29
10. Therefore Give Up Striving for Rewards. 30-35

B. *Why Men Fail*
1. What Causes Men to Short-change Themselves? 36
2. Desirousness, Caused By the Sense of Urgency. 37-43

Chapter IV. The Origin and Nature of Wisdom

A. *Wisdom Is Primordial*
1. Primeval in Origin. 1-6
2. Perpetually Reexpressed. 7-10

B. *Reciprocation Is Universally Practiced.* 11
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2. Through Appreciating Ultimate Reality. 24-25
3. Through Restraint of Senses. 26-27
4. Through Gifts, Restraints, Study, Prayer, Vows. 28
5. Through Breath Control, Diet. 29, 30 *passim*
6. Usefulness of Reciprocity. 30-33 *passim*

C. *Need for Understanding Wisdom*
1. Learning to Understand Is Possible. 34
2. Understanding Brings Omniscience. 35-38
3. Understanding Brings Serenity. 39-42

Chapter V. The Puzzle Restated and Resolved

A. *How Can One Reconcile Desire for and Abandonment of Rewards?*
1. Which Is Better? 1

2. Neither. 2-3
3. For the Goal Is the Same. 4-6

B. *How Is Living In the Goal Experienced?*
1. Continuing to Work, Without Desire for Reward. 7
2. Continuing to Cause, Without Desire to Cause. 8-12
3. One Lives Happily in His Body. 13-16
4. One Lives Happily in the World. 17-25
5. One Experiences True Freedom. 26-28

C. *The Goal Can Be Found as God.* 29

CHAPTER VI. HOW TO ATTAIN THE GOAL OF LIFE

A. *By Abandoning Ambition*
1. By Doing Willingly Whatever Needs to Be Done. 1
2. By Giving Up One's Dreams. 2-4
3. By Self-mastery. 5-7
4. By Maintaining Indifference. 8-9
5. By Solitary Living. 10-11
6. By Yogic Practices. 12-26

B. *Why Tranquility Is Blissful*
1. It Embodies Ultimate Reality. 27
2. It Enjoys Being as Intrinsic Value. 28
3. It Lacks Nothing. 29-32

C. *How Can One Remain Serene While Yet Being Restless?* 33-34
1. By Practicing Indifference to Impulses. 35-36

D. *What Happens to one Who Fails?* 37-39
1. He Gets Another Chance. 40-44
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E. *Which then Is Better?*
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2. Yoga as Confident Identity with the Universe. 47

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A. *How to Experience Identity in Everyday Affairs.* 1-3
1. The Constituents of Nature. 4-5
2. Their Relation to Ultimate Reality. 6-7
3. How Ultimacy Appears in Everything. 8-11 and 12 *passim*
4. How Everything Depends on Ultimacy. 12-15 *passim*

B. *Four Kinds of Appreciators (Good People)*
1. Those Suffering Afflictions. 16
2. Those Striving for Understanding. 16
3. Those Accomplished in Understanding. 17-19
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C. *How the Deluded Regard Ultimacy.* 20-27

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4. How Is Ultimate Existence Described? 4
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3. As Endless Time and All Dimensions of Space. 33
4. As All-Devourer and All-Initiator. 34
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2. Invisible Magnificence: Many Eyes, Suns, Gods. 8-23

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